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**Month of Mary,
for all the
faithful; or, A
practical life of
the blessed ...**



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MONTH OF MARY,
FOR ALL THE FAITHFUL;
OR,
A Practical Life of the Blessed Virgin.

FROM THE FRENCH.

“Talis fuit Maria, ut ejus unius vita, omnium sit disciplina.”

Ex libro S. AMBROSII, de Virginibus.



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GIRALDUS MOLLOY, S.T.D.,
Censor Theologicus Deputatus.

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✠ PAUL. CARD. CULLEN,
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Hiberniæ Primas.

APPROBATION

TO THE ORIGINAL FRENCH EDITION.

WE hereby approve of the publication of this work.

Its doctrinal accuracy, the moral reflections, eminently practical, which it contains, and the happy selection of new Examples will, we have no doubt, render this book useful both to the clergy and faithful.

✠ PIERRE HENRI,
Bishop of Belley.

Indulgences granted in favour of those who perform the Devotions of the Month of Mary.

To encourage the faithful to the practice of this beautiful devotion, Pope Pius VII. granted (March 21, 1815) and confirmed for ever (June 18, 1822) the following Indulgences:—To all the faithful who either publicly or in private shall practise some devotion in honour of the Blessed Virgin during the month of May, an Indulgence of 300 days for each day; and a Plenary Indulgence on any one day of the month on which, after Confession and Communion, they shall pray to God for the wants of the Church. These Indulgences are made applicable by way of suffrage to the suffering souls in Purgatory.

Act of Consecration to the Blessed Virgin.

MOST Holy Virgin, Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, Masterpiece of the hands of the Omnipotent, fitting object of the complacency of the Adorable Trinity, perfect model of all virtues; suffer me, at this time of special grace and devotion, to offer thee the tribute of my gratitude and love. Would that I could offer thee the hearts of all mankind; would that I could render thee such homage as the angels and saints shall render thee eternally in heaven; but, since I cannot do so, accept at least the offering which I now make thee of myself. I offer and consecrate to thee my body, my soul, my senses, my faculties, and my life. I recognise and choose thee for my Queen, my Patron, my Protectress, and my Mother. After my God and Saviour, I desire to belong to thee and live for thee alone. It shall ever be my glory to be of the number of thy most faithful servants and most docile and devoted children. Yes, O Mary, after Jesus, in thee do I place my trust, to thee shall I have recourse in all my necessities. Thou shalt be my strength in danger, my refuge in tribulations, my support in sorrow, my guide and model in virtue. I will study to imitate thy humility, sweetness, patience, resignation, modesty, purity, thy love of thy neighbour, and, most of all, thy love of God. These are my resolutions; but, alas! thou knowest my frailty and inconstancy; thou knowest the dangers that surround me, and the enemies that assail me on all sides. O Mother of goodness and mercy! remove the obstacles that impede me in the paths of virtue; help and direct me amidst the thousand perils to which I am exposed; if I stray, recall me; if I fail in courage, strengthen me; if I am called to the conflict, sustain me. But, above all, oh, do not forsake me at the terrible moment that shall decide my lot for eternity; be with me at the hour of death. Then, most of all, be my refuge, my strength and support; defend me from the last and redoubled assaults of the devil; obtain for me courage against the fear of death and the terrors of judgment. And when my soul shall quit this life, receive it into thy maternal arms, and accompany it to the judgment seat of God; obtain for me grace and mercy, and conduct me to heaven, where I shall praise, bless, and love thee for eternity with the angels and saints. Amen.

PREFACE.

WHY this new *Month of Mary*? Is it that there is a dearth of books of this kind? On the contrary there are a great many; but some of them, having been written a long time back, have begun to lose their interest from being too well known; others are meant for only a special class of readers. It has occurred, therefore, to us that a new *Month of Mary* intended for the faithful generally would be of some use, and that is what we have here attempted.

In most of the *Months of Mary* the lecture is divided into three points, with a short moral reflection at the end of each point. This method, so suitable for pious persons who are accustomed to meditation, appears to us to present the inconvenience of not giving sufficient prominence to the moral deduction, of not impressing it

enough, and therefore not bringing it fully home to the minds of the ordinary faithful. We have given for each day of the month one only point for consideration, either on the life or the virtues of the Blessed Virgin, with a moral reflection somewhat developed. After that an Example, as much as possible suited to the lecture; and, finally, a little Practice, which recalls in a few words the subject of the meditation, and of which it should be, as it were, the fruit.

Such is the end, such the plan, of this little work. That it may be found useful to souls is the only ambition of the Author.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
Eve of the 1st of May.—Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,	9
Example: Reward of devotion to the Blessed Virgin,	13
1st Day.—Birth of the Blessed Virgin,	15
Example: St. Teresa, whilst yet a child, takes the Blessed Virgin as her Mother,	18
2nd Day.—Graces that accompanied the birth of the Blessed Virgin,	20
Example: Devotion of Marius Olive to the Blessed Virgin,	24
3rd Day.—The Blessed Virgin receives the name of Mary,	26
Example: Holy death obtained through devotion to Mary,	29
4th Day.—Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple,	30
Example: Devotion of John Peter Masief to the Blessed Virgin,	34
5th Day.—The Blessed Virgin spends her childhood in the Temple,	36
Example: Imitation of the Blessed Virgin,	39
6th Day.—The Blessed Virgin is confided to the care of St. Joseph,	42
Example: Pious Pilgrimage and Cure,	46
7th Day.—The Blessed Virgin chosen to be the Mother of God,	48
Example: A child preserved from the Flames,	52
8th Day.—The Blessed Virgin visits her Cousin St. Elizabeth,	54
Example: The Miraculous Conversion,	58
9th Day.—Journey of the Blessed Virgin to Bethlehem, and birth of Jesus,	61
Example: The Child of Mary,	65
10th Day.—The Shepherds and the Magi come to adore the Infant Jesus,	67
Example: Docility to Grace,	71
11th Day.—Presentation in the Temple,	72
Example: Mary deplores the violation of the Law of God,	77
12th Day.—The Blessed Virgin, to save the Divine Infant, flies into Egypt,	79
Example: Confidence in God,	82
13th Day.—The Blessed Virgin leaves Egypt and returns to Nazareth,	85
Example: Submission to the Will of God,	89

	PAGE
14th Day.—The Blessed Virgin loses Jesus and finds Him again in the Temple,	91
Example: Fear of Sin,	95
15th Day.—Life of the Holy Family at Nazareth,	96
Example: A Christian Family,	101
16th Day.—Jesus works His first miracle at the prayer of the Blessed Virgin,	104
Example: Efficacy of Prayer,	108
17th Day.—The Blessed Virgin accompanies Jesus in His missionary journeys,	110
Example: The grace of salvation,	114
18th Day.—Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Cross,	117
Example: Cure obtained through a Novena,	121
19th Day.—Joy of the Blessed Virgin at the Resurrection,	123
Example: Sacrifice for the Faith,	127
20th Day.—Last years of the Blessed Virgin,	129
Example: A young girl interred alive,	133
21st Day.—Death of the Blessed Virgin,	136
Example: St. Francis De Sales delivered from temptation,	140
22nd Day.—Assumption of the Blessed Virgin,	142
Example: Devotion of St. Stanislaus to the Blessed Virgin,	146
23rd Day.—Crowning of the Blessed Virgin in heaven,	148
Example: The Sceptre of Mary,	152
24th Day.—Humility of the Blessed Virgin,	154
Example: Pride vanquished,	158
25th Day.—Faith of the Blessed Virgin,	160
Example: Faith rewarded,	164
26th Day.—Love of the Blessed Virgin for God,	167
Example: Triumph of Grace,	170
27th Day.—Admirable Charity of the Blessed Virgin,	173
Example: The Charitable Soldier,	176
28th Day.—Vigilance which the Blessed Virgin exercised over herself,	179
Example: Act of Courage,	182
29th Day.—Inviolable purity of the Blessed Virgin,	184
Example: A Fate and a Warning,	187
30th Day.—Trials and sufferings of the Blessed Virgin,	190
Example: Heroic resignation of a Christian mother,	193
31st Day.—Confidence which we should have in the Blessed Virgin,	195
Example: Confidence in Mary,	198

MONTH OF MARY.

FOR THE EVE OF THE FIRST OF MAY.

HERE are three principal motives to excite our devotion to the Blessed Virgin, namely, her eminent dignity, the example of the saints, and our own advantage.

1. After God, the object most worthy of our devotion is the glorious Virgin Mary. Enriched from the first moment of her existence with the most precious favours, she is the most holy and perfect of creatures, the masterpiece of the Almighty Creator, the queen of heaven and earth, the sovereign dispensatrix of God's graces, and, what surpasses all her other prerogatives and elevates her far above all other created beings, she is the Mother of God. Such are the titles which this august queen has to our respect and veneration. Oh, how

interest herself in behalf of those who are solicitous to honour her, to love and serve her! No one ever invoked her, says St. Bernard, without experiencing the effect of her tender mercy. Heaven and earth shall perish, says the holy Louis de Blois, sooner than she shall fail to succour those who sincerely invoke her. Her ear is ever attentive to our prayers; her maternal heart is ever accessible to our miseries and moved by our wants, she knows to what danger we are exposed, she knows also our weakness; she sees how the devil assails us, the snares he lays for us, and the efforts he makes in order to ruin us and drag us into the abyss, and she is ever ready to aid us in overcoming those dangers if we only implore her assistance. Let us then cast ourselves with confidence into the arms of this tender mother, invoking her in all trials and temptations, and laying all our wants before her, and she will console us in our miseries and fortify us against our own weakness and the dangers by which we are surrounded. Are we in sin? let us pray to her to obtain pardon for us and she will speedily reconcile us with her Divine Son; are we in the state of grace? let us

appeal through her for perseverance, and we shall be strengthened in our good resolutions and fortified in the paths of justice and sanctity; in fine, if we be faithful in honouring Mary, in loving and serving her, she will guide us in safety to the haven of a happy eternity, for it is impossible, say the Holy Fathers, that a true, devoted servant of Mary should be lost.

EXAMPLE.

A girl of five years of age had her hand dreadfully bruised by a door; the mother at once took her to a skilful surgeon, but, notwithstanding every care and remedy, the wound became rapidly worse, so that every hope of cure was at an end, and nothing remained but to amputate the member in order to save the life of the child. The physician in making this announcement to the mother told her that the operation need not take place for three days, but after that time there could not be further delay. Returning home full of sadness at this decision, the mother met a pious woman to whom she related her sad story. "Why do you abandon yourself to despair?" said this holy soul. "Go to the Blessed Virgin; throw yourself at her feet; pray to her with faith, confidence, and perseverance, and you shall certainly obtain the cure you wish for." Reassured by these words, the mother and child took courage; they hastened to an altar of our Blessed Lady, there they prostrated

themselves in prayer, beseeching and conjuring her with tears to hear their prayers and grant their petition. At the end of half an hour, the child suddenly exclaimed, "Mother, I think I am cured." The mother precipitately arose, took the child, and at the door of the church removed the bandages. The hand was perfectly restored, and as well as if the accident had never happened. Beside herself with joy, she related to everyone she met the miracle which the Blessed Virgin had performed. On the day appointed she took her child to the physician. "Well, my good woman," he said, "I see you have decided on having the operation performed." With a joyful countenance she showed him her child's hand, and related to him what had happened. "Ah," said the doctor, who was a man of strong faith, "I am no longer astonished at your daughter's cure, for the Blessed Virgin is a better physician than the whole of us together" (*Rosier de Marie*).

PRACTICE.

Let us form the resolution to honour, love, and serve the Blessed Virgin, not only during this sweet month, but also during our whole life, that we may thereby come to love, praise, and bless her for all eternity in heaven.

FIRST DAY.

BIRTH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THE Blessed Virgin was born at Nazareth, a little town in Galilee. Her parents were St. Joachim and St. Anne. Tradition says that her parents, who were already stricken in years, had made a promise to the Lord to consecrate their child in an especial manner to His service, should He hear their prayers, by sending them one. Moved by their faith and piety, the Lord granted their petition, and on the 8th of September was born at Nazareth the child who had been destined from all eternity to be the mother of the Saviour.

The birth of Mary had been predicted and announced from the beginning of the world. Scarcely had our first parents been seduced by the infernal serpent, when God, addressing the tempter, said, "Because thou hast deceived the woman, thou art accursed amongst the beasts of the earth; upon thy breast thou shalt go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life; I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and thy

of which we stand in need. Oh, how happy has been our lot compared to that of so many poor infidels who know not God, or so many heretics whose misfortune it has been to have been born and reared outside the Church! How many graces and means of sanctification have we at our command, of which they are deprived? But so much the more culpable shall we be, and the more severe our punishment if we abuse these precious favours by not turning them to good account. Jesus Himself tells us so in the Gospel; He will insist on more from him to whom much has been given. Let us make good use of the means of sanctification which God in His goodness has so abundantly placed at our command, so that they may not be to us hereafter a subject of greater condemnation, but rather of merit and reward.

EXAMPLE.

St. Teresa, whilst yet a child, takes the Blessed Virgin as her mother.

There lived in Spain, in the 16th century, a saint renowned for her sublime revelations, the heroism of her virtues, and the incredible labours she underwent in order to extend the Order of Carmel. of

which she was the reformer. At the age of twelve she had the misfortune to lose her mother, a lady of eminent piety, and to whom she was tenderly attached. Fully conscious of her great loss, the little Teresa, drowned in tears, cast herself before an image of the Blessed Virgin. "Sweet Queen of Heaven," she said, "the loving mother whom I have lost always told me that you never abandon the orphan. Oh! since I now am one show yourself my mother. I will be an obedient and dutiful child to you, I will ever love you with my whole heart." After this prayer, Teresa arose with a more tranquil mind, shedding less bitter tears. From that moment she always evinced towards her heavenly mother all the love and affectionate respect of a dutiful child, and Mary, on her part, constantly treated her as a child of special predilection. Without doubt, it was owing to the protection of this powerful mother that she was indebted for the high degree of sanctity, which has made her one of the most illustrious heroines of the Church; it was through the care of Mary that this *Rose of Carmel* bloomed so brightly and shed so delicious a perfume in the garden of the celestial spouse. "It has always been the case with me," St. Teresa used constantly to say, "that I was sure to get assistance whenever I recommended anything to the Blessed Mother of God" (*Mois de Marie de la Jeunesse: Cretienne*).

PRACTICE.

Let us thank God for having caused us to be born in the bosom of the true Church, preferably

to so many others; for having shed upon us the light of faith, and instructed us in the saving truths of the Gospel. What a terrible account shall ours be, if we abuse these graces by failing to profit by them?

SECOND DAY.

THE GRACES WHICH ACCOMPANIED THE BIRTH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

THOUGH there was no external circumstance to mark, as an extraordinary event, the birth of the Blessed Virgin, yet there was in reality much to distinguish it from all others. It is of faith that all men are conceived and born with the stain of original sin attached to them; but by a special privilege, bestowed on her alone, Mary was exempt from this sad consequence of the fall of our first parents. From the first moment of her existence she was all pure, all holy, and immaculate. God, who had destined her to become the Mother of His Son, would not have her to be, for even an instant, under the anathema of sin and the consequent dominion of the demon. And, indeed, as she was to give to the world the

God of all sanctity, it was not meet that she should have been previously sullied by sin; as she was to subvert the throne of Satan by crushing the head of the infernal serpent, it was not fitting that Satan should have at any time, established his empire in her heart. The Mother of God was, therefore, created in the state of justice and sanctity in which our first parents were created, and from which they fell,—in that state of purity and innocence in which the angels were called into existence. Of Mary alone, of all creatures, it could with truth be said: Thou art all beautiful, and there is no stain in thee.

The Council of Trent, when declaring that all men were born subject to original sin, distinctly declares that this decision does not apply to the blessed and immaculate Mother of God. Finally, to set the question for ever at rest, the Sovereign Pontiff, speaking in the name of the infallible Church of God, on the 8th of December, 1854, pronounced a solemn decision, making the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin an article of faith. But, not only was Mary preserved from original sin, she, moreover, had bestowed

upon her in the first moment of her existence, an abundance of most precious graces. God wished to render her worthy of His Son to whom she was to give birth, and for that end enriched her with all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He conferred upon her every perfection which a creature is capable of receiving; He raised her above all the celestial intelligences; He made her more beautiful than the angels, purer than the seraphim, so that of Mary, and of her alone, it can be said that, even at her birth, she surpassed in grace and perfection all the angels and saints. How different our birth from that of Mary! Conceived in sin, we were born in enmity with our God; heaven was shut against us. But the Lord, ever good and merciful, quickly freed us from that unhappy state by admitting us into the number of His friends and adopted children. Scarcely had we seen the light when we were carried to the baptismal font, and there, as soon as the blessed water flowed upon our brow, divine grace flowed into our soul, and we became regenerated, cleansed, sanctified; original sin was washed away, we received a new birth, we became new creatures; from being enemies of

God, we became His friends; from being children of wrath and malediction, we became children of grace and love; from being exiles from the kingdom of God, we became heirs to heaven, brethren to Jesus Christ, and entitled to a participation in His eternal glory hereafter. The graces of Baptism not only effaced in us the stain of original sin, and restored to us all the rights and titles of which its commission had deprived us, it also enriched us with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, it planted in our soul the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity; it purified us in the adorable blood of Jesus Christ, and we came forth from that saving bath as pure and bright as the angels. How manifold and precious the graces bestowed on us in baptism! How solemn the promises and stringent the obligations we contracted by it! We there and then bound ourselves to live according to the maxims of the Gospel and the example of Jesus Christ. How have we fulfilled these engagements? Oh, if we have had the misfortune to break them, let us bemoan our unfaithfulness before God, petitioning Him for pardon, and making the firm resolution to lead henceforth a life more

regular, more Christian, and more in conformity with our baptismal engagements.

EXAMPLE.

Devotion of Marius Olive to the Blessed Virgin.

The life of this young man affords an illustrious example of tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin. He was born at Marseilles on the Octave of the Assumption, and received in baptism the name of Marius in honour of Mary, in accordance with the pious wish of his parents. Some days after they brought the infant to a celebrated chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, under the title of *Notre Dame de la Garde*, to offer him solemnly to his august patroness. His life showed how agreeable the offering was to Mary. From the very first there was noticeable in him a tender devotion for his good mother, the name he always addressed her by from the time he could first lisp it. A statue or picture of Mary had the greatest attraction for him, and he recognised them at the most considerable distance; "See," he used to say, "see my good mother!" Scarcely was he three years old when he was invested with the holy scapular, the little devotions attached to which were performed for him until he was sufficiently old to repeat them himself. His love for Mary increased with his years; at fourteen, he felt great delight in joining the Confraternity of the Blessed Virgin, established in the Seminary of Aix, and he was a model for all the associates by his filial love for Mary. He had recourse to her in all his doubts and per-

plexities; later on he consulted her regarding his vocation. Assured that God called him to the priesthood, he adjured his holy patroness to confirm him in this resolution, and when his mother objected to his delicacy, his great youth, and the imprudence of forming a precipitate resolution, "Mother," he replied, "I have prayed and got others to pray to the Blessed Virgin, and she has heard me; it is what I ought to do." God was satisfied with his holy intention, and soon after called Marius to Himself. In his last moments, the pious youth redoubled his love and devotion for Mary; he regarded her next to God, as he said to his brother, as the cause of the joy with which his soul was filled. He was constantly occupied with the thought of Jesus and Mary, and when he appeared scarcely to breathe, it was only these sacred names that could attract his attention. When he seemed to suffer from violent temptations, so that all his frame trembled, some one said to him to have confidence in Mary, and immediately he was restored to peace. In these holy sentiments he breathed his last sigh on the Octave of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin. After death, his countenance exhibited a marvellous beauty; it was remarked that his body shared already the joy which his blessed soul possessed in the society of that good Mother whom he had so tenderly loved in life (*Mois de Marie, &c., par M. l'Abbé Michaud*).

PRACTICE.

Let us be ever mindful that the chief duty of a Christian is to fulfil the promises made in Baptism.

By these we shall be judged when, hereafter, we appear before the tribunal of God. Wo to us, if we be found wanting in the observance of them!

THIRD DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN RECEIVES THE NAME OF MARY.

SOME days after her birth, the Blessed Virgin received from her parents the name of Mary, a name expressive, at the same time, of her greatness and power, of sweetness and goodness. In truth, the name of Mary signifies august sovereign; it signifies also star of the sea, and the Blessed Virgin fulfils to the utmost all that is indicated by this mystical name. She is the sovereign of angels and men, the queen of heaven and earth, she is also our star; she is, according to St. Bernard, that brilliant star which safely guides us through the thousand perils by which we are menaced on the troubled ocean of this life; she is the benign star by which we securely steer into the harbour of salvation. The name of Mary is a subject of happiness and joy to

heaven! Such is the power and efficacy of the holy name of Mary, says a learned author, that when it is pronounced, all heaven rejoices and the angels are filled with delight. The name of Mary is a source of hope and consolation on earth. After the adorable name of Jesus, there is no other that can impart to us so much consolation or inspire us with such confidence as that of Mary. Witness with what earnestness those who are in sorrow and affliction press round the altar of this august sovereign. Thither the sinner goes to bewail his crimes, the weak frail Christian to seek for succour; there the heart plunged in grief and disappointment goes to obtain patience and consolation. The name of Mary is also a source of fear and terror to hell. Oh, how the devils tremble and are seized with terror at the sole mention of the name of Mary, says St. Bernard. The name of Mary is so terrible to the demons, says, again, St. Bonaventure, that when we invoke it, the evil spirits are driven away in dismay. We find all the saints and sacred writers unanimous in making use of similar expressions; they all agree in assuring us of the efficacy of this

sacred name in putting to flight the spirit of darkness. Finally, the name of Mary is a source of peace and salvation to those who invoke it with confidence. After that of Jesus, no other name has such potency in heaven as that of His holy Mother; none, therefore, after His divine name, which can obtain for us so much grace and assistance. However miserable we may be, how deeply soever we have sinned, we should never despair; we can do all things through Mary, provided we invoke her with confidence. O you, whoever you may be, exclaims St. Bernard, who are tossed on the boisterous sea of this world, would you avoid miserable shipwreck? look to Mary. Are you exposed to violent temptations and wish to overcome them? turn to Mary. Does the fear of God's judgment and the magnitude of your sins fill you with sadness, and despondency tempt you to despair? call upon Mary. In doubts, in danger, in grief and adversities, think of Mary, invoke Mary. May this holy name be ever in your mouth and in your heart! Following Mary you shall not stray, praying to her you shall never give way to despair; if she support you, you shall not fall; if she protect

you, you shall have nothing to fear ; if she be propitious you shall attain the harbour of salvation.

EXAMPLE.

Holy death obtained through devotion to Mary.

Père de Smet, a famous missionary of the Society of Jesus amongst the savage tribes of America, some years ago arrived at a colony of the Pottowatomies, situated on the Osage river ; whilst the cargo was being discharged, they carried on board a young man who was dangerously ill. It was already late in the day, and on account of his luggage, the missionary could not take up his quarters in the wigwam, which the chief had prepared for his reception. He, therefore, remained on board. During the night the young man suffered very much. His groans attracted Père de Smet, and brought him to his bedside to soothe and console him. These charitable attentions of the missionary touched the young man, and led him to open his heart to him. "I am a Catholic," he said, "and I have received a thoroughly religious education from an uncle who is a zealous ecclesiastic. I have remembered and put in practice his holy instructions, and especially I have ever had a great devotion to the Mother of God. I have sojourned these six years past in the mountains amongst a savage tribe without once having met with a priest, yet I have never been forgetful of my heavenly Mother, Mary." "Without doubt, it is she who has sent me to you at this time of

danger," said the venerable missionary; and she means to verify in your regard the words of St. Bernard, that no one who had recourse to her was ever abandoned. Believe me it is so; profit, therefore, by the grace which she has obtained for you. It is a long time since you have purified your conscience; perhaps there are many things with which it reproaches you. Begin your confession." The young man gladly availed himself of the invitation of the minister of God; he confessed with sentiments of the greatest piety, and received the last sacraments. Père de Smet learned afterwards that he died the day after he reached the end of his journey (*Annales de la Propagation de la Foi*).

PRACTICE.

Let us frequently call upon the holy name of Mary, particularly in times of temptation. In those moments of dreadful danger, let us throw ourselves into the arms of this most tender Mother. She is sure to come to our aid, she will effectually protect us, and make us triumph over the enemies of our salvation.

FOURTH DAY.

PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE.

WHEN Mary was but three years old, her parents took her with them to the Temple of Je-

rusalem, and there they presented her to the Lord in accordance with their previous promise, and solemnly and publicly devoted her wholly to His service. The Church celebrates the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin on the 21st November. What thoughts and sentiments filled the soul of Mary whilst her parents thus offered her to God at the foot of His altar? By what close ties did she not unite herself to her Creator and her God! The Holy Ghost has not revealed to us what passed in the heart of Mary on this occasion, but all tradition and authority agree in saying that she then consecrated herself to the Lord in an absolute and irrevocable manner. She consecrated to Him her heart, her soul, her body, all her faculties; she devoted herself to Him entirely and for ever. She made a renunciation of her will, her goods, her family, all that she possessed most dear and precious, to give herself to God without reserve. Nothing daunted her in making this sacrifice, neither extreme youth, nor love of parents, nor the complete seclusion to which it consigned her, nor the austere and penitential life which it involved; she readily and unhesitatingly made an offering

of all for the salvation of her soul. What wonderful devotedness and heroic virtue in a child of three years old ! The fathers of the Church have ever regarded the consecration of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple as the most perfect sacrifice and most pleasing act of religion ever made to God from the beginning of the world until then.

How much does the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin condemn our love of our own ease and sloth in the service of God ! Mary consecrated herself to the Lord from her most tender infancy, and as soon as she was capable of knowing and loving Him ; and we are ever finding a pretext to postpone and evade those duties which we owe to God and our immortal souls. In vain does grace knock at the door of our heart, we resist it ; in vain does the Lord urge us to devote ourselves to His service, we reject His tender invitations ; in vain does remorse agitate and alarm us, we seek in dissipation of thought to escape the reproaches of conscience, and continue to live a life of sloth and negligence, even, perhaps, of sin. Mary consecrated herself to God irrevocably and without reserve ; having once given

herself to Him, she served him with fidelity, and made continual progress in virtue; she became each day more fervent, more pious, more inflamed with the love of God. How far, alas! are we from imitating her constancy! What has our life been but a continued succession of promises and withdrawal from those engagements; of resolutions to be better, and relapses into sin. We sue to God for pardon, promising to be henceforth faithful, never to offend Him again, yet how often, perhaps, even in a day or two, have we fallen back into those very faults which we affected to detest with our whole heart. Mary made an unreserved consecration of herself to God; she offered to Him her heart with all its affections, and her soul with all its aspirations. Has our offering of ourself been after this manner? Is it thus we devote ourselves to God? Do we offer Him a heart free from all guilty attachments and exempt from all culpable affections to sin? God cannot dwell in a divided soul, in a heart of which vice and passion hold possession. In imitation of Blessed Mary, let us now consecrate ourselves to God without delay, offering to Him, sincerely and unreservedly, all that

that Jesus Christ Himself has said in His Gospel, The kingdom of God suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away.

FIFTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN PASSES HER YOUTH IN THE TEMPLE.

AN ancient tradition, founded on Sacred Scripture, informs us that one portion of the Temple was assigned to young virgins who dwelt there in retreat and recollection. Wise and holy matrons watched over them; instructed and directed them; taught them to read and meditate upon the holy Scriptures; and especially trained them in the love and practice of virtue. Amongst these young virgins Mary was placed when she was presented in the Temple at the age of three years. There she was reared up in the fear and love of God, there she spent the happiest days of her life. Apart from the world, alone with God, she was wholly occupied about her salvation and perfection. What rapid progress did she not make in virtue! Each day beheld her more humble, more modest, more pious, more charitable. Full

of respect for, and submission towards her superiors, she regarded them as holding the place of God in her regard, and obeyed them with eagerness and joy. Mary was also full of sweetness and kindness towards her companions; she lived in perfect unity and peace with them; she bore with their peculiarities and defects; she consoled them in their troubles, assisted them in their needs, and rendered them every kind of good service. Mary edified every one by the holiness of her actions and the regularity of her conduct; she was the first at every duty, the most exact in observing the law of God, the most deeply grounded in humility, the most perfect in the practice of the other virtues. Such was the good example that Mary constantly gave during her sojourn in the Temple.

Mary was also most assiduous in prayer; with it she commenced and ended each day; and she prayed also frequently during the day. "She spoke little," says St. Ambrose, "but she meditated much." "She had attained to such a habit of mental prayer," says the same father, "that nothing could trouble or interrupt her in this holy exercise. In prayer she found her greatest happiness

and sweetest consolation; but, then, with what faith, with what confidence and love did she pray! Ever united to God in heart and mind, she dwelt continually in His divine presence. To Him she directed all her thoughts, words, and actions, so that Mary's life in the Temple may be said to have been a continual prayer."

Let us imitate the virtues which Mary practised in the Temple. Like her, let us respect those who are placed over us, and who have a right to command us; being always submissive and obedient to them. Let us recollect that they derive their authority from God, and that to fail in respect and submission towards those in authority over us, is to fail in respect and submission towards God Himself. Like Mary, let us be kind, patient, and charitable towards our neighbour, avoiding what would give them pain, bearing with their defects, seeking opportunities of rendering them kind services, compassionating and comforting them in times of trial, and doing all for them that we would have them do for us. Finally, let us, like Mary, direct all our actions to God by prayer,—praying ~~the~~ the commencement of the day, to offer

it to God and to ask the grace to spend it holily; praying at night, to thank God for the favours He has conferred on us, and to sue for pardon for such faults as we have been guilty of; praying also and raising our hearts to God from time to time during the day, offering Him our trials, our labours, all our actions. Thus devoted to God and sanctified by prayer, our life will flow on full of good works and merits in the sight of heaven.

EXAMPLE.

Imitation of the Blessed Virgin.

Like all children of predestination, Leonie R—— had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin from the most tender years. Whilst yet a child, her mother happening to tell her how the Blessed Virgin was consecrated to God in the Temple at three years of age, she promptly exclaimed, “and I also will give myself to God like the Blessed Virgin.” “But,” the mother replied, “the Blessed Virgin whilst in the Temple, practised patience, sweetness, and humility; she bore with the waywardness of her companions; she showed no disinclination to do what she was commanded, but always obeyed promptly and without a murmur; you often act quite differently from all this.” “Well, I will amend,” replied the child. “The Blessed Virgin when in the Temple,” the mother

said again, "loved God with her whole heart, and offered to Him all her thoughts and actions." "I will also love Him like her," replied Leonie. "The Blessed Virgin devoted herself to prayer," added the mother; "she prayed in the morning, in the evening, and frequently during the day, and her prayers were always full of fervour, piety, and recollection." "Teach me a prayer," said the child, "and I will offer it to God and the Blessed Virgin every day." The prayer was soon supplied, and Leonie never let a single day pass that she did not repeat it with a singular devotion. According as this child of benediction advanced in years so also the more fervent did she become in labouring for her salvation and perfection, and the more closely did she study to imitate the virtues of her whom she had chosen as her model. Her ejaculatory prayers to Mary were almost continual; she had recourse to her in all circumstances with the most filial confidence. It gave her the truest delight when she had the opportunity of doing something in honour of her heavenly Mother; she adorned her chapel, decorated her altars, and in every way in her power gave proof of the love for her with which she abounded. And not only her childhood, but still more her youth, did she consecrate to Mary, passing her entire life in her love and that of her Divine Son. Like so many souls specially dear to God, she was early called to her never-ending reward. Being made perfect in a short time, her soul pleased God, and, therefore, He hastened to bring her out of the midst of an iniquitous world, lest its wickedness should alter her understanding, or its deceit beguile her soul.

As her end drew nigh she placed the last days of her life under the protection of her whom she had always served as a mother. She passed some days in a retreat consecrated to Mary, where she meditated on the years that shall never end, and commended herself and the terrible passage from earth to eternity to the care of her whom the dying have never invoked in vain. Mary heard the prayer of her beloved child. Leonie came forth from her sweet and happy retreat enjoying a profound peace and a spirit of entire resignation to the holy will of God; and though she was but twenty-seven years of age, she saw death approach without fear and without regret. She fell asleep calmly in the arms of Mary, as a child on the bosom of its mother. Oh, how happy is the death of those who have spent their lives in the love, and service, and imitation of the Blessed Virgin! (*Mois de Marie de la Jeunesse Chretienne*).

PRACTICE.

Imitate the conduct of Mary in the Temple; like her be submissive and obedient to your superiors, kind and charitable to your neighbours, pious and recollected in your prayers, and faithful and exact in all your duties.

SIXTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN IS CONFIDED TO THE
CARE OF ST. JOSEPH.

THE Blessed Virgin was not more than eight or nine years old, and leading a life in the Temple that was the admiration of angels and men by its holiness and shining virtues, when she had the misfortune to lose her father, St. Joachim, and, shortly after, her mother, St. Anne. This double affliction was a great grief to her, for Mary, like all wise and virtuous children, tenderly loved her parents. What tears did she not shed at the feet of the Lord! There she came to lay down the burden of her trials and her sorrows; there she poured out her heart in sweet and fervent prayers. Happy they who, like Mary, come to shed their tears on the bosom of God and at the foot of His altar! They will find there the only consolation that can soothe their misfortunes by aiding them to bear them with holy resignation. It is the common belief that the Blessed Virgin remained in the Temple up to the age of fourteen or fifteen; poor

orphan that she was, without help or means, what was there to tempt her from this holy retreat? The Lord, who never forsakes those who serve Him faithfully, did not abandon her; she was confided to one who was her kinsman, a venerable old man named Joseph. He was a poor artizan, a carpenter by trade, but a man of great piety and consummate virtue; he was the holiest and most perfect of men; and it was by reason of his saintly qualities and eminent virtues that he merited to be chosen the protector and supporter of Mary. In truth, the moment drew near when, without ceasing to be a virgin, Mary was to bring to the world the Saviour of mankind; she therefore had need of a protector, one, who by his labour should furnish support to Mary and her Divine Son, and St. Joseph was chosen to fulfil these exalted functions. What a glorious employment was that of St. Joseph; how happy it must have been to him to be associated with the purest of virgins in watching over the infancy of Jesus! with what zeal and fidelity he acquitted himself of these sacred duties! Penetrated with the deepest reverence for the Divine Infant, he bestowed an unceas-

ing care upon them, he rescued Him from the fury of Herod, he nourished Him by the labour of his own hands, he loved Him as his adopted child, and adored Him as his Saviour and his God. St. Joseph was also full of veneration and respect for Mary; he rendered her every kind service in his power, assisted her by his wise counsels, consoled her in her anxieties and troubles, and was the faithful companion of her journeys; he was to her at once a guardian, a protector, and a father.

It was by faithfully fulfilling the duties of his state of life that St. Joseph was sanctified. It is in the same manner that we are to attain to sanctity. Whatever be our state or condition in life, we all have duties to fulfil, duties that are of strict obligation; and it is mainly through the faithful fulfilment of these duties that we can hope to accomplish our salvation. Are we, like St. Joseph, placed in charge of a family? Let us be solicitous for those who are committed to our care, watching over them, correcting them when they do wrong, giving them good example by our words, our acts, our whole conduct. Let us recollect that when we come to be judged, we shall have to

answer to God, not only with regard to the salvation of our own soul, but also for the salvation of all those who have been confided to us; and wo to us if one single soul perish through our negligence! We shall have to account to God soul for soul. Are we, on the other hand, placed under a superior, or a master, and bound to obey and be submissive to the will of others; let us not murmur or be impatient at our lot; let us bear in mind that Jesus Christ Himself, all God as He was, willed to be in subjection and to obey others during His life on earth. I am come, He says, not to do my own will but the will of God the Father who sent me; I am come, not to be served but to serve. How should not the example of Jesus Christ teach us to bear with resignation, and even with joy all that may be painful or irksome in obeying those who are in authority over us! Finally, in whatever position we are placed by divine providence, let us fulfil the duties of our state of life with fidelity, in a spirit of faith, and under the eye of God, and we will thus become, like St. Joseph, perfect Christians and great saints.

EXAMPLE.

Pious Pilgrimage and Cure.

A devout female named Marie Françoise Petitot, of the diocese of Besançon, was deprived of the use of her limbs for thirty-three years; they were completely paralyzed and contracted under her. She had consulted the most skilful physicians and had tried every remedy without effect. Despairing of help from human means, she determined to have recourse to heaven. As she had a great confidence in the Blessed Virgin, she formed the resolution to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Notre Dame des Eremites in Switzerland, and begged her parents to take her there, but they constantly refused to do so, saying the expense would be only money thrown away, and that God would not perform a miracle in her favour. On the approach of May, 1850, she redoubled her importunity and prayers. At last a poor woman remarking her great faith in the mother of God, offered to bring her in a poor vehicle which she had. After seven days of toil and privations they arrived at Notre Dame des Eremites on the evening of the 18th of May. Next day, which was the Feast of Pentecost, the poor cripple had herself carried before the miraculous image of the Blessed Virgin. It was at the time when the solemn Mass was about to be celebrated, at which she assisted with a piety full of faith and confidence, and was praying with great fervour, when all at once, during the Elevation, she felt a thrill run through her

whole body, and at the same moment the full use of her limbs was restored to her. The late invalid raised herself to her knees, shedding tears of gratitude and joy. A great commotion quickly took place amongst the congregation, every one rushing forward to witness the miracle. A charitable lady gave stockings to the girl, who put them on for the first time for upwards of thirty years, and forthwith approached the Holy Table. After Mass she returned to her lodging on foot. She remained three days more at Notre Dame des Eremites, and each day went to and returned from the church on foot, surrounded by a crowd of persons who were attracted by the report of the miracle. A formal report of the cure was drawn up and forwarded to her native parish, but the fame of it had already reached it; and when she re-entered France her progress had quite the character of a triumphal procession in honour of Mary. Many flocked from all sides to see her, and wonder at her cure; and many, in consequence, who had been unbelievers or neglectful of their religious duties, were converted.—(*Extract from l'Union Francomtoise, 13th June, 1850.*)

PRACTICE.

In whatever condition Providence has placed you, never repine at your lot, but apply yourself to the faithful fulfilment of the duties of your state of life, bearing with patience the trials and misfortunes you may meet with, and offering them to God in atonement for your sins; thus will you succeed in sanctifying and saving your soul.

SEVENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN CHOSEN TO BE THE
MOTHER OF GOD.

AFTER spending, according to the tradition, eleven or twelve years in the Temple, Mary quitted that happy retreat and went with St. Joseph to reside at Nazareth. She there lived in the most complete retirement, and in the practice of every virtue. In common with every pious member of the race of Israel, she sighed and prayed without ceasing for the coming of the Messiah; but, at the same time, she was very far from thinking of herself as the Mother of God the Saviour. Never had she an idea that the Lord would raise her to so sublime a dignity—one of which she held herself wholly unworthy. But God, who loves to unite Himself to the humble, and heaps His benefits on them, had already chosen her in preference to all other creatures, and accordingly He sent one of those happy spirits that surround His throne to announce to her that she was to become the Mother of the Redeemer promised and expected during so

many ages. Mary was alone in her place of retreat, and probably engaged in prayer, says St. Bernard, when of a sudden the Angel Gabriel presented himself before her, and addressed her in these words—"Hail, full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women." Never before had human creature been addressed in terms of praise like to these. Mary, profoundly humble, was only troubled and alarmed by them; she knew not what to think or believe about what she heard and saw. The Angel, seeing her troubled, hastened to reassure her—"Fear not, Mary," he said, "thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive and bear a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His Father; and He shall reign in the House of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." These words dissipated Mary's first cause of trouble, but at the same time led to a new disquietude. And Mary said to the Angel—How shall this be accomplished in me, as I am resolved to remain a virgin? Be not disturbed, replied the

Angel, for in becoming a mother you shall at the same time not cease to be a virgin. The Child whom you shall bring forth shall be conceived by the Holy Ghost, who shall overshadow thee; "and therefore the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." Her apprehensions on this score being thus removed, Mary cried out with sentiments of profound submission and humility—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to thy word." The Angel, who awaited only her consent, immediately disappeared, and returned to heaven, having fulfilled his mission. But at the moment—O ineffable prodigy!—the greatest and most wonderful of mysteries took place in Mary. The Eternal Word, the only Son of God, descended into her chaste womb, there to take to Himself a body and soul like to ours, there to become truly man, without ceasing to be God; and Mary became mother without ceasing to be a virgin. Thus was accomplished for our salvation the adorable mystery of the Incarnation, and thus also the most humble of virgins was raised to the sublime dignity of Mother of God.

In the Holy Communion we have the hap-

piness of receiving the same God whom Mary received at the moment of His Incarnation. As often as we approach the Holy Table we truly receive into our breast this same Jesus, whom Mary bore in her womb. We receive His Body, His Blood, His Soul, His Divinity. His Body then becomes our food, His Blood our drink. His Soul communicates to us Its strength and sanctity; His Divinity raises us so as to become as it were like unto God. The union we contract with Jesus Christ is so close and intimate that we become as it were one with Him. As the food which we take changes into our own substance, and becomes identified with us, so by Holy Communion we are identified with Jesus Christ, so that it is no longer we who live or act, but it is Jesus Christ who lives and acts in us—to use the beautiful expression of the Apostle—O wonderful, ineffable union! And not only does the Holy Communion unite us intimately with Christ, but it also advances us in grace and in the spiritual life; it preserves and confirms us in virtue; it gives us strength and courage to resist temptations and to repress the evil tendencies that continually solicit us to sin. Let us, therefore,

often approach to this august Sacrament, bringing to it a pure heart, profound humility, a lively faith, a tender confidence, and above all an ardent love; for Jesus, who makes it His delight to dwell with the children of men, earnestly desires to come into our soul to load it with His choicest and most precious graces.

EXAMPLE.

A Child preserved from the Flames.

In the early ages of the Church it was the custom to give to little children who still preserved their baptismal innocence the consecrated particles which remained after the Communion of the faithful. It happened one day that a young Jewish child who went to school with little Christian children, went to the church with them and innocently presented himself with the others to receive the particles of the Holy Eucharist. On his return home he related to his father what he had done. The father, who was a brutal man and most envenomed against the Christian religion, got into a sort of frenzy. Being a glass-maker by trade, he seized his unhappy child and cast him alive into the blazing furnace which he used for melting his glass. Shortly after, his mother, who had been absent, returned home, and, knowing nothing of what had passed, she sought her son on every side. As none could give her any information, she traversed the

various quarters of the town in search of him, but all in vain. Inconsolable at the loss of her beloved child, she gave way to her grief, calling upon him by name as if he were present. All at once, to her surprise, a voice replied calling her, mother. She was struck with astonishment, and ran to the furnace from whence the voice seemed to proceed; she opened the door and looked in. What was her affright when she saw her poor child amidst the flames, but still alive! She called her neighbours to her aid; everyone hastening in order to witness the prodigy. They drew the child from the fire, safe and sound, and asked him how it was he had fallen into the furnace, and how he had been preserved in the midst of the burning flames. He related how his father had thrown him into it for having assisted at the service of the Christians, but that a great lady, beaming with light, had preserved him from the flames, covering him with her mantle; that she had given him food to appease his hunger, and that she perfectly resembled the image of the Blessed Virgin which he had seen in the church. It was known then that Mary had saved him and preserved his life by defending him from the flames. The Emperor of Constantinople—where the miracle occurred—having been informed of the barbarous conduct of this unnatural father, had him arrested and brought to justice; but the wretch, so far from being converted, became all the more hardened in his infidelity, and died impenitent. As to the mother, she had herself instructed in the Christian faith, received the grace of Baptism, and became one of the most faithful and fervent of Christians (*Eragrius, and Gregory of Tours*).

PRACTICE.

Approach frequently the Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist; we need it to sustain us and enable us to resist our passions, for we are weak and miserable; but take heed to approach it ever with holy dispositions and a soul all prepared. Make each Communion as if it were your last.

EIGHTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN VISITS HER COUSIN
ST. ELIZABETH.

No sooner had the Blessed Virgin conceived in her chaste womb the Eternal Word than, animated with the desire of bestowing on the house of Zachary a share of those divine graces with which her soul was filled, she left her peaceful retreat and went into the mountains of Judea to visit her cousin Elizabeth. She went with haste, for charity urged her forward, and "charity brooks no delay," says St. Ambrose. Arrived at the end of her journey, she enters the house of Zachary, salutes Elizabeth, and embraces her; but—miracle of grace!—at the voice

of Mary, the infant of Elizabeth bounds with joy in the womb of his mother; he is sanctified on the instant by the presence of the Saviour. Finally, the grace received by the infant communicating itself to the mother, Elizabeth was in turn filled with the Holy Ghost. Supernaturally enlightened, she at once understood all the wonders which heaven had wrought in favour of Mary; and accordingly, full of respect and admiration for the youthful mother, she cried out—"Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." Then she immediately added—"Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." Mary then comprehended that Elizabeth was enlightened regarding the mystery of the Incarnation, and that it was the Holy Ghost Himself who had revealed it to her. No longer able, therefore, to conceal her august quality of Mother of God, she gave way to her transports of lively gratitude,

wound charity. Let us respect the name of Christian which we bear; let us never make use of a single word that would tend to violate the virtue of holy purity; let all our expressions be marked by a holy reserve. Let us never be unmindful that we are in the presence of God who hears all our words, and who will one day demand of us a strict and rigorous account of them.

EXAMPLE.

The Miraculous Conversion.

M. Alphonse Ratisbonne was born of a rich and distinguished Jewish family residing at Strasbourg. Like so many young men who devote themselves to a life of pleasure, he was devoid of all faith, and practised no religion. He had an elder brother, a convert and a Catholic priest. He had conceived such an aversion to this brother that he would neither see him nor hold any communication with him. He fostered a bitter hatred for priests, churches, religious houses, and especially for the Jesuits, the sole mention of which Society was enough to put him in a fury. Towards the close of the year 1841, previous to his intended marriage with a relative who was as yet too young, he determined on making a voyage of pleasure to the East. He had an aversion to going to Rome; but Providence, that disposes everything to its designs, brought him there in spite of himself. He there made the

acquaintance of M. Theodore de Bussièrès, who from having been a Protestant had become a fervent Catholic. M. Bussièrès spoke to him regarding the Catholic religion, its grandeur and advantages. M. Ratisbonne replied with sarcasm and impiety. "Since you are so strong-minded," said M. de Bussièrès, "will you have the courage to submit to a harmless test?" "What test?" "That of carrying about you a medal of the Blessed Virgin." M. Ratisbonne laughed and shrugged his shoulders. He, however, accepted the medal, and scoffingly exclaimed, "Behold me now Catholic, apostolic, and Roman!" "But this is not all," said M. de Bussièrès; "you have to recite every day this prayer in honour of the Blessed Virgin;" and he gave him a copy of the *Memorare* or Prayer of St. Bernard. "Well, agreed; I will do so." It was then the 15th January, 1842. On the night of the 19th or 20th M. Ratisbonne was awakened suddenly, and saw fixed before him a great black cross of a peculiar shape, but without any figure of Christ upon it. In vain did he endeavour to get rid of this cross: on what side soever he turned, there it was again before him. Next day M. de Bussièrès, who had charge of the obsequies of one of his friends who had died suddenly, asked him to accompany him to the Church of San Andrea, whither he went to make preparation for the funeral service. Not many moments after M. Ratisbonne had entered, when, like St. Paul on his way to Damascus, he was all at once struck by grace. The whole church disappeared from his view; he saw but one thing; he saw before him, all beautiful, brilliant, full of sweetness and majesty, the

Blessed Virgin herself, just as she was represented on the miraculous medal which he wore about his neck. Urged by an irresistible power, he fell upon his knees and watered the floor with his tears. An interior supernatural light illumined his mind; without ever having studied the Catholic religion, he found himself acquainted with all its principal truths. He saw the unhappy state of his soul with affright; he saw it stained with original sin, and earnestly begged the grace of baptism. It was administered to him some days later in presence of an immense number brought together by the report of the miracle. M. Ratisbonne has since renounced the world, and joined the Jesuits, amongst whom as a priest he labours for the salvation of souls. This extraordinary conversion has been declared miraculous by a decree of the Sovereign Pontiff (*Extract from Narrative of the Conversion of M. Ratisbonne*).

PRACTICE.

Be ever most reserved and prudent in your discourse; never say a word that would scandalize your neighbour. What a misfortune were we by sinful language to cause a soul to sin and be eternally lost! Through all eternity that soul would continue to accuse us, to curse and invoke vengeance upon us.

NINTH DAY.

JOURNEY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN TO BETHLEHEM, AND BIRTH OF JESUS.

THE time of the birth of the Saviour was at hand when the Emperor Cæsar Augustus, who then possessed the empire of the whole world, ordered a general census of his kingdom. - Cyrinus, the governor of Syria, was charged with this enrolment in Judea. In accordance with the imperial decree each family had to repair to its own city to be there inscribed in the public registers. Though the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were settled at Nazareth, in Galilee, their family belonged not to that province. Being both descended from the royal house of David, Bethlehem, a small town of the tribe of Juda, was the cradle of their family. It was, therefore, to Bethlehem that they had both to repair. It was a journey of nearly thirty leagues, therefore both long and toilsome, especially to the young virgin about to become a mother; and all the more so on account of having to be performed in the inclement season of winter. Nevertheless, without a complaint

or murmur, as soon as they became informed of the order of the emperor both Mary and Joseph hastened to obey it; for they knew that it was from God that princes reign, and that to disobey their laws was to disobey the will of God. Oh! how easy and sweet would obedience become to us if, like Mary and Joseph, we ever looked upon the commands of our superiors as the manifestation of the will of God!

After much toil and fatigues, borne with patience and resignation, the holy wayfarers arrive at Bethlehem. It was the termination of their journey, but not so of their distress and sufferings. The whole town was full of strangers; all the inns were full. In vain then they sought shelter; none would admit them. Repulsed on every side, rejected by all, they at last retired to a poor stable open to all the winds of heaven. There, at midnight, in the depth of winter, without aid, and destitute of all human comfort, Mary brought to the world her divine Son Jesus. As she had conceived miraculously and without prejudice to her virginity, she brought forth without pain and without ceasing to be a virgin.

As soon as He was born, Mary wrapped Him in some poor clothing which she had with her, and then laid Him in a manger on a poor bed of straw. Such was the cradle of the Son of God made man, coming into the world in order to save us; such the palace wherein the King of heaven and earth chose to be born.

What a lesson for us is the stable of Bethlehem! We see there the three most holy of persons, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. We behold them slighted, exposed to all the inclemency of the season, reduced to the utmost misery; their only shelter a poor stable, their only bed a little damp straw, and even these did not belong to them: they had not whereon to lay their head. But why was it that Jesus Christ chose to be born in a state so lowly, so poor, and surrounded by so much sufferings? It was to give us a pattern of detachment, of penance and mortification; it was to point out to us the way to heaven. There are three ordinary sources from which almost all our faults proceed—attachment to creatures and the things of this world, the love of pleasure and enjoyment, a repugnance to humiliations and sufferings.

found him at the bottom of the river, and taking him by the hair they brought him to land. Every one came to see the dead body; but they were agreeably surprised to find the child full of life, unhurt, and quite joyful. They questioned him how he had remained so long under water without injury; he replied, that immediately after he fell in he saw a beautiful lady who came to his aid, and with her own hands prevented the water from touching him, and that he had no doubt she was the Blessed Virgin, Mother of God. Rosnata, full of gratitude towards his heavenly protectress, never ceased to honour and serve her during the remainder of his life, which he closed with the glory of martyrdom (*Bollandists, July 14th*).

PRACTICE.

Let us go often in spirit to the stable of Bethlehem, and there beholding Jesus and Mary in misery and suffering, let us learn to bear up under all the miseries and sufferings of this life; let us learn to sanctify our trials and make them meritorious for heaven, by uniting them to the sufferings and trials of Jesus Christ and His divine Mother.

TENTH DAY.

THE SHEPHERDS AND THE MAGI COME TO BETHLEHEM TO ADORE THE INFANT JESUS.

HARDLY had the Blessed Virgin given birth to the Divine Infant, when an angel all beaming with light appeared to some poor shepherds, who were keeping the night watch over their flocks, and announced to them that the Messiah, for whose coming they had so long sighed, was just born in a stable at Bethlehem. Obedient to the voice of the angel, who summoned them to the Saviour's crib, the shepherds hastened to set out for Bethlehem, where they found the child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger. Full of a lively faith, they recognised Him as their God, prostrated themselves at His feet, adored Him with the profoundest respect, and devoted themselves for ever to His service; thus, having rendered Him their homage, they returned to their flocks, praising and giving thanks to the Lord. Thus it was, by their docility to grace and their lively faith, that these poor shepherds merited to become the first adorers and first disciples of Jesus.

ing that corrupting book, relinquish that society, avoid that person whose conduct is a cause of scandal to you. Have we hearkened to these holy inspirations? Have we not slighted and resisted them? Have we not sometimes sought to stifle remorse of conscience because it teased and importuned us? And have not our resistance and unfaithfulness to grace been the cause of God's abandoning us to ourselves? "I have called on you and you would not hear me," says our Lord; I have invited you and you have rejected my invitation. I now withdraw my graces from you, and deliver you up to the desires of your heart. Let no such dreadful evil ever befall us, O my God! Strike, punish us, deprive us of earthly goods, of health, of life itself, but take not Thy grace from us; for such a loss would be the greatest of misfortunes, as it would be the cause of our eternal ruin. After the example of the shepherds and the wise men, let us be faithful to grace, let us never resist it, let us obey with promptitude its salutary teachings, and this divine grace, along with making us happy and being our consolation on earth, will secure us an eternal recompense in heaven.

EXAMPLE.

Docility to Grace.

A certain youth, on the occasion of making his first holy Communion, had made the following resolution:—"If I ever should have the misfortune to fall into mortal sin I will go to confession at once, and I will never lie down to rest without being first reconciled to God." Some months later he happened to commit a grievous sin. It was on a Saturday that this misfortune befel him, and as he lived at a distance from the church, he at first said to himself, "To-morrow when I go to Mass I will seek out my confessor and make my confession." But forthwith he remembered his promise, and he heard, besides, something that said to him, "Do what thou hast promised; go to confession." However, he still hesitated; in this internal conflict he threw himself on his knees to implore the guidance of the Blessed Virgin, and for that intention recited a "Hail, Mary." Scarcely had he concluded his prayer than he felt himself strongly urged to go to confession at once. He arose and went in search of his confessor. On his return he met his mother, who asked where he had been. "I have been to confession," he said, with a countenance beaming with happiness and joy. "I had been guilty of sin, and I would not go to rest until I had forgiveness; but now that I have recovered the friendship of God I will rest in peace and sleep undisturbed." His mother used to let him remain in bed a little longer on Sundays than on other days. Accordingly she did not call him next

morning till seven o'clock. Knocking at his door and calling him by his name she got no response. A quarter of an hour later, as he still slept, his mother returned, and, impatient at his not replying, she went into his chamber and approached his bed. Strange! he did not stir, he did not breathe! She took his hand, it was rigid and cold; she looked into his face in affright, and uttering piercing cries she fell insensible to the ground. The boy had died during the night. O happy youth in having been obedient to grace, and not putting off confession till the morrow! Let us imitate his example, and never go to sleep with an unrepented mortal sin on our conscience (*Le Mois de ma Mère. R. P. Terwecoren*).

PRACTICE.

Let us never resist grace; it would be for us the greatest of misfortunes. How many sinners have been lost, how many souls have fallen into hell through having stifled remorse of conscience and refused to listen to that interior voice urging them to repent and make their peace with God!

ELEVENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN PRESENTS HERSELF IN THE TEMPLE FOR HER PURIFICATION, AND TO MAKE THE OFFERING OF HER DIVINE SON.

THE law of Moses required that, - forty days after the birth of a male infant, the

mother should present herself in the Temple to be purified, and to offer to God her newborn son. It is evident that Mary was not bound by that law; she was under no obligation to present herself to be purified, since she never had ceased to be all virginal and pure; it was not incumbent on her to bring thither her Son to offer Him to the Lord, for that Son was God, and as God He was above all such laws. Still, to set us an example of obedience, Mary conformed to a law that did not bind; and accordingly, when the forty days fixed for her purification were accomplished, she took in her arms the Divine Infant and repaired to Jerusalem. Arrived in the Temple, she submitted, like the lowliest of her sex, to all the ceremonies of purification; omitting nothing, however painful or humiliating it might be. Without in any way asserting her wonderful privileges of being at once virgin and mother of God, she fell in with the crowd, she placed herself in the ranks of the poor and sinful. The law prescribed two sorts of offering—one for the poor and the other for the rich; Mary made the offering of the poor. The law commanded ordinary mothers, who had contracted this

legal stain, to offer a victim of expiation. Mary, as if one of them, made this offering; in a word, she submitted to purification as if she had been sullied, as if she had forfeited her virginity. Why, O Mary, this ceremony of purification? did you not know how the angel from heaven assured you that you were the purest of virgins, the holiest of creatures? Mary was not ignorant of this; but the higher she was raised in the sight of God, the more she abased herself in the sight of men, to confound our pride; the more reasons she had for considering herself exempt from the law, the more exactly did she fulfil it, to condemn our acts of rebellion and disobedience.

According to the law, Mary was also to offer her Divine Son in the Temple. She therefore took her Jesus in her arms and brought Him before the altar, there she presents Him to the Eternal Father as the sole Victim capable of appeasing His wrath, resigns Him unreservedly to all the requirements of His dread justice, and unhesitatingly offers Him as the Victim who by His death was to purchase our salvation. What a sacrifice was this for the heart of a mother!

But that which most of all tended to crush the tender heart of Mary was the sad prediction of the prophet Simeon; he foretold that this Infant which he took into his arms should one day be persecuted, insulted, outraged, and put to death, and that a sword of sorrow should also pierce her heart. This prediction was as the point of the sword to Mary, which thenceforth continued to lacerate her heart, and which it succeeded in completely piercing on Calvary at the foot of the cross. It was, then—this day of her purification and presentation of her Son in the Temple—a day of great sorrow to the Blessed Virgin; but it was one, at the same time, of great merit by her exactitude and zeal in the perfect observance of the law.

Alas! how far are we from being exact like Mary in fulfilling the laws of God! Mary submits to a law that no way bound her, and we are unwilling to comply with those that are of strictest obligation to us. God enjoins on us to keep His commandments, and we daily violate them, and frequently, even many times in the day. He threatens us with the severest penalties and most rigorous chastisements if we commit

sin, and we seem to say : "I know that sin is offensive to Thee, that it displeases and outrages Thee : no matter, I will commit it, and that in Thy presence and under Thy eyes. I know that Thou canst punish me and cast me into hell : no matter, I will gratify my passions and give up to the wicked desires of my heart." If our fellow-man held us suspended over an abyss, would we have the temerity to insult and outrage him whilst he thus held our life in his hands? Our life is in the hands of God; He holds us suspended over the abyss of hell, over the fiery gulf; at any moment He could cast us into it, and we dare to offer Him insult and outrage! we dare to provoke His wrath and His vengeance! What blindness! what madness! Let us now form the firm and sincere resolution never again to offend God, but to faithfully observe all His commandments, and we shall thus secure in this life the joy and peace which proceed from a good conscience, and perfect and unending happiness in the life hereafter.

EXAMPLE.

Mary deplores the Violation of the Law of God.

On Saturday, the 19th September, 1846, being the vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of Dolours, Melanie Mathieu, aged 14, and Maximin Giraud, aged 11, both of the commune of La Salette, in the diocese of Grenoble, happened to conduct the flocks of which they were in charge to a level plain in the mountains, distant two leagues from any habitation. About midday, having eaten their frugal repast, they went to put their wallets beside a spring which at the time had become dried up; after which, contrary to their custom, they both went to sleep. They soon awoke, and, uneasy at not seeing their cattle, they hastened away in search of them. Ascending an eminence they discovered them lying over against them at a little distance. They then descended to take away the wallets which they had left beside the dry bed of the stream. All at once a light more brilliant than the sun appeared to them, in the midst of which they saw a lady seated on a stone. Her attitude was that of one who was a prey to the most intense grief; her face was bathed in tears, but her tears fell not to the earth, they vanished like sparks of fire. On her brow there was a crown of roses and a brilliant diadem. A white kerchief garlanded also with roses, was on her bosom. At this sight the two children were seized with terror, but the lady arose, crossed her arms, and in a sweet, kind voice said: "Fear not, my children, I am come to make a great announcement to you."

Reassured by her words of kindness the two little shepherds approached. The Queen of Heaven also advanced towards them, and, shedding tears, said that she had long mourned that she could no longer stay the hand of her Divine Son, whose anger was aroused against mankind on account of their crimes, particularly on account of blasphemy of the sacred name of God and the desecration of the Lord's Day; that it was on this account that the fruits of the earth had begun to fail, and that if those crimes were continued the punishment of them would also become greater. Having made these sad announcements and commanded them to communicate them to all the people, she confided to each a secret which they have never been willing to divulge. She then ascended from the earth and disappeared, leaving the little shepherds amazed with what had just taken place. To perpetuate the memory of this miraculous apparition the Bishop of Grenoble has had a noble church erected on the mountain of La Salette; the Sovereign Pontiff has enriched it with precious indulgences, and the faithful constantly crowd thither from all parts to implore the help and protection of the Mother of God (*Extract from the "Notice sur Notre-Dame de la Salette"*).

PRACTICE.

Let us faithfully observe all the commandments of God. Let us not forget that it is our violations of God's holy law that draw upon us His anger and His chastisements. Let us ask pardon for our offences, and promise that we will be faithful to Him for the time to come.

TWELFTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN, TO SAVE THE DIVINE
INFANT, FLIES INTO EGYPT.

MARY had learned from the mouth of the aged Simeon that her Son should be exposed to persecution from the wicked. This prediction was soon verified. Hardly had she returned home after her purification in the Temple when an angel appeared in sleep to St. Joseph, and said to him: "Arise, take the Child and his Mother and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee. For it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (Matt. ii.). Joseph at once arose, and, taking Jesus and His holy Mother with him, forthwith set out for Egypt. Herod expected that the wise men would return to Jerusalem to give him an account of their journey as he had told them. He awaited them some days, but having ascertained that they had gone back to their own country by another way, he gave vent to his rage, and formed the horrible design of murdering all the male children that were in Bethlehem and in all

the borders thereof from two years old and under. He believed Jesus to be still at Bethlehem, and hoped to include Him in this cruel slaughter. He accordingly sent soldiers with orders to execute at once this sanguinary project. The wretch was only too literally obeyed by his infamous satellites! These poor innocents were quickly despatched without exception or pity; blood flowed in every house. On every side were heard the voice of lamentation and cries of despair: the unhappy mothers bewailed their children, torn from their arms, butchered before their very eyes, and were not to be consoled. Good reason, indeed, they had to weep! But whilst they mourned for their children on earth, their children were rejoicing with God in heaven; having shed their blood for Jesus Christ, they are numbered amongst the saints and martyrs.

The fate of Mary was little better than that of the poor mothers of Bethlehem. Constrained to fly precipitately, and in the middle of the night, she had to leave her country, her relatives, her friends, to go into a strange and idolatrous land, where she knew no one and had no means of subsistence. She had to traverse more than

a hundred leagues, and that at an inclement season and with the sacred Infant in her arms; to travel over a vast and frightful desert where she found neither shelter, nor help, nor provisions. Ah, who can tell all that Mary had to suffer during this long and painful journey! Habituated, however, from infancy to adore the designs of God in all things, she cheerfully submitted to His holy will, and resigned herself with confidence to the direction of His divine Providence.

The Providence of God watches over us, governs and directs us. Nothing happens to us unless by His order or permission; a single hair does not fall from our head without the permission of our heavenly Father. Oh! what a consolation to think that we have a tender Father on high who constantly cares for us, who wills nothing but what is for our welfare and happiness! Let us, therefore, put all our trust in Him, and whatever be the trials or afflictions through which we have to pass, let us adore and bless this divine Providence. But particularly with regard to the salvation of our soul should we repose our confidence in God. Why, in truth, should we

not have the utmost confidence in a God who has so much loved us, who has done so much for us, who has shed the last drop of His blood for our salvation? However great may be our sins we should not despair of His mercy, for it is infinitely greater than even our malice and ingratitude. But neither let us abuse His goodness by sinning by reason of it the more freely; let us not say: "Later on I will break off this bad habit, I will withdraw from this sinful occasion; but there is time enough; God is good and will pardon me when I turn to Him." How many sinners are lost, plunged into hell through this mis-called confidence! God is always ready to pardon us when we sincerely have recourse to Him, but He often denies time for repentance to those who wilfully continue in sin. He has promised pardon to the penitent, and not to-morrow to the sinner.

EXAMPLE.

Confidence in God.

A young Italian soldier, aged twenty-two, who served in the French army, was sentenced to death for having wounded a comrade and raised a weapon

against one of his officers. On the 15th October, 1858, the day before that fixed for his execution, he was told that he had only some hours to live. At this intelligence he gave himself up to the most violent despair. In vain did the chaplain try to calm him and to awaken his confidence in God by recalling to his mind the goodness and mercy of our Lord. He replied to all his exhortations only with impiety and blasphemy, and though he allowed him to come to him again, the chaplain found him in no better dispositions than before. The minister of God, seeing how unavailing were his efforts, had another priest brought. Both together hastened to the side of the unhappy criminal, but all their prayers and exhortations continued without effect. Without, however, losing hope, the priest began to speak to him of the Blessed Virgin; told him how she is the consoler of the afflicted, the refuge of sinners; and urged him to put his trust in her. At the name of Mary, the countenance of the prisoner brightened, and a change seemed to take place in his heart. The priest presented him with a medal of the Blessed Virgin, representing our Lady of Victories. The prisoner took it thankfully, and after looking on it attentively an instant: "Who is the Infant," he said, "that the Blessed Virgin holds in her arms?" "It is her Son Jesus, our Saviour." "Why has He his arms stretched out?" "It is to receive all sinners, and press them to His heart; see how He stretches out His arms to you, He invites you to come to Him; resign yourself to His love." At the sight of our Saviour opening His arms for all sinners, hope was reawakened in the breast of the prisoner; grace

triumphed, and he cried out: "Give me Italian books that I may prepare myself for the Sacraments." It was then midnight. He spent three hours examining his conscience and preparing himself for confession with many groans and tears. At three o'clock he made his confession, and after that appeared as if quite a new man. Perfectly resigned to his fate, he now only thought of the happiness of receiving his God. At five, his confessor said Mass in his cell, and administered to him the Holy Communion; and a second Mass of thanksgiving was then celebrated. During the whole time, the condemned man seemed absorbed in the most profound fervour and piety. The moment of departure at last came. After being invested with the scapular, and putting around his neck a little cross, he arose, took a large crucifix in his hands, on which he kept his eyes constantly fixed, and advanced towards the place of execution, repeating every instant: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me! Most merciful Jesus, who died for me on the cross, have mercy on me in this dreadful moment!" Having arrived at the place of execution, he begged a last absolution from the priest, which he received with the deepest humility, embraced his confessor, and having several times repeated: "My God, Thy will be done!" he let them bandage his eyes, and placed himself on his knees. Almost at the same moment, a discharge of musketry was heard, and the poor fellow was dead. His body fell bathed in blood; but his soul, full of confidence in God, entered into eternity, there, we hope, to chant for ever the mercies of Jesus and His Divine Mother (*Le Pouvoir de Marie en Exemples*).

PRACTICE.

We should never despair of our salvation; but we should also never cease to labour for it; for, notwithstanding that God desires that we should be saved, yet He will not save us if we, on our part, do not what depends on us. "God who has created you without yourself," says St. Augustine, "will not save you without yourself."

THIRTEENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN LEAVES EGYPT AND RETURNS TO NAZARETH.

THE happy moment at length is come when the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph could leave Egypt to return to their native land. Herod, their persecutor, died, and went before God to account for his guilty conduct. Hardly had that cruel prince compassed the massacre of the children at Bethlehem, when the hand of God smote him in a most signal and terrible manner; he was at the height of his wicked career when he was seized with a dreadful malady; a consuming fire took possession of his frame, and raged even in the marrow of his bones.

From the effects of this disease his flesh putrified and fell off in shreds. Myriads of worms became engendered in his wounds, devoured him alive, and caused him the most horrible sufferings. His whole body was as a putrid corpse; his punishment was insupportable; it was but the just chastisement of his sins, and the retaliation for all the innocent blood shed by this impious and barbarous prince. Happy, even then, if he had profited by his sufferings to become converted, and to make his peace with God! But, like the greater number of those who have grown old in iniquity, instead of repenting, he only became the more hardened in his crimes, and he died as he had lived, impenitent.

As soon as Herod had breathed his last, an angel appeared again to St. Joseph in sleep, and said to him: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead who sought the life of the Child." Ever docile and obedient, Joseph arose promptly, took Jesus and His divine Mother, and set out for the land of his fathers. After the endurance of much sufferings and fatigues, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph arrived in

Palestine. What was their grief and alarm, when they learned that Archelaus, the son of Herod, had succeeded his father in the government of Judea! Fearing that the new king in inheriting the throne of his father had also inherited his feelings of hatred against Jesus, they durst not advance, and knew not what to do; whilst they were in this state of perplexity, they received during night a warning from heaven, that they were to retire to Galilee. They accordingly set out for that province, and settled at Nazareth, where, as before, they led a life of prayer, poverty, and labour.

How admirable was the submission of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph to the appointments of Divine Providence! An angel commands them to go into Egypt, and they went; he orders them to return into Judea, and they do so; he directs them to retire into Galilee, and they repair thither. Never the least murmur, or the slightest impatience, no matter what amount of trouble or difficulty they encountered. They knew the will of God; that was all sufficient for them; they at once obeyed it, were wholly submissive to it, and fulfilled it with eager-

ness. Is it thus that we conform ourselves to the will of God in the various sacrifices it demands of us in all the events of life? Let us ever bear in mind, that nothing occurs on earth without the permission of God. Sickness, infirmities, accidents, loss of goods, death of parents and friends, the persecutions, even, that we meet with from our fellow man, all, all are in accordance with the designs of God. He has foreseen them, He orders or permits them for our sanctification and salvation.

Let us adore the designs of God in our regard; and whether He raises us up or humbles us; whether He consoles us or sends us afflictions; whether He bestows worldly goods upon us or reduces us to indigence; whether he gives us health or sends us sickness; in whatever manner He disposes of us, let us always be submissive to His holy will.

"The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," said holy Job; "as it pleased the Lord, so is it done; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i. 21). Let us be ever thus conformable to the will of God, and we shall act as true Christians, for the

whole Christian life consists in willing that which God wills, and wishing for nothing save only as He wills.

EXAMPLE.

Submission to the will of God.

In a certain town, in the diocese of Arras, there lived a person well known for her edifying life and many good works. This person was attacked by a malady that, for more than six months baffled all the skill of the physicians, and was the source of great affliction to her family. Her sufferings were intense, and her weakness extreme. Her limbs, which were withered and almost completely powerless, prevented her from changing her position; she was so enfeebled, that every one expected her immediate death. In the early part of January, 1854, some of her friends, alarmed at her condition, proposed to make a novena to the Blessed Virgin in her behalf. "I consent," she replied, "on the condition that you ask for me not my cure, but for the perfect accomplishment of the will of God; for whether He is pleased to restore me to health, or to prove me by sickness, I submit myself entirely to His holy will." Her pious friends met together before the altar of Mary each day of the novena, earnestly imploring the Mother of God to intercede for her who was so dear to them. The invalid united her own prayers to theirs. Still her state continued unchanged. During the night preceding the last

day of the novena, her sufferings even became so excruciating, that, for the first time, involuntary cries of pain escaped her. Those about her thought that her end was at hand. Next day at half-past six, she received Holy Communion; at seven, the holy sacrifice of the Mass was offered for her; towards half-past seven, she requested the person who attended her to bring her clothes. She refused doing so at first, thinking it to be only a whim of the sick person. Finally, she complied with the request; what was her astonishment when she saw her at once make use of her limbs, dress herself, and get out of bed with a readiness that indicated a complete freedom from all suffering! The first thought of the invalid, thus suddenly restored to health, was to cast herself in thanksgiving before her heavenly benefactress. She proceeded forthwith to the church without assistance, accompanied by her relatives, who could hardly believe their eyes, so much were they astonished. Having heard the holy Mass, she returned home with equal facility, and without experiencing any fatigue. This incontestable fact, regarded as supernatural, even by the physicians, awakened in the hearts of many, sentiments of filial confidence towards the Mother of God. May it produce the like sentiments in us, and lead us to venerate the august Queen of Heaven! (*L'Univers*, February 12th, 1854).

PRACTICE.

In adversity as in prosperity, in sorrows as in joy, in sickness as in health, in all the events of life, let us submit ourselves entirely and unre-

servedly to the will of God. Let our words be ever: God wills it, God permits it, and He wills or permits nothing save for my greater good; His holy will be done! blessed be His holy name!

FOURTEENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN LOSES HER DIVINE SON,
AND FINDS HIM IN THE TEMPLE.

THE Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph went regularly every year to Jerusalem for the celebration of the Paschal Feast. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to custom and brought Him with them. Arrived at the Temple, the holy travellers acquitted themselves with exactitude of all that the law prescribed. They passed in retirement and prayer the days consecrated to the celebration of the Passover; and these ended, Mary and Joseph, in company with their relatives and friends set out on their return to Nazareth. When leaving, not perceiving the Divine Child, they concluded that He was in company with persons of their acquaintance, and had no apprehension on His

account. Thus they journeyed a whole day, hoping each moment that Jesus would rejoin them. Now, however, as the day closed, and He did not appear, they felt the greatest uneasiness on His account. They sought Him amongst their relatives and friends, but in vain; no person had seen Him, no one had any intelligence regarding Him. What was then their grief, their trouble! They at once turned back in search of Him, they returned to Jerusalem; but their first efforts to obtain information about Him were unsuccessful. It was not until after three days' anxious and toilsome search that they found Him in the Temple, seated amidst the doctors of the law, interrogating them and answering their questions, astonishing everyone by the wisdom and knowledge He displayed. Mary and Joseph joined the crowd that pressed around to hear Jesus; they heard His praises echoed on all sides, and were filled with admiration. As the loss of Him had caused them deep pain and sorrow, so His presence gave them the greatest happiness and joy. How happy it is to find Jesus again after having lost Him! What sweet consolation His divine presence dif-

fuses in souls that are afflicted! The grief that Mary had experienced in the absence of her Divine Son was so great and deep, that she could not help uttering her loving complaint. "Son," she said, "why hast Thou done so to us? behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing!" "How is it that you sought Me?" He said to them; "did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?"

We are to remember that, if the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had the misfortune to lose Jesus, it was only through inadvertence, and altogether without their being in the slightest way to blame. Alas! how often do we lose Him wilfully, through our own fault, by sin? Yes, by sin we lose God, we lose our soul, we lose everything. By sin we revolt against God, we expel Him from our heart, we become His persecutors, His executioners; we crucify Him again, according to the expression of St. Paul. What a crime! to crucify our Creator, our Saviour, our God? By sin we lose our own soul, we yield it up to the demon; Satan possesses himself of it, dishonours and degrades it, drags it through the mire of vice and evil passions, and

tramples it under foot as a vile slave. What a degradation and abasement is this! By sin we lose heaven. One single mortal sin, one only sinful thought wilfully consented to, would be enough to deprive us of heaven, and precipitate us into hell. See the angels: they were the noblest creatures of God; they were His messengers, His favourites. Yet, a great number of them had the misfortune to commit a sin, one sole sin of thought, the sin of a moment, committed only once; and on the instant, without giving them time for repentance, they were hurled, without pity and for eternity, into the abyss of hell! Let us then dread sin, since God has punished it so rigorously even in His angels. Let us never again yield deliberately to it; but if unhappily we should commit it, let us not remain in that sad state; let us lose no time in arising out of it lest we should be surprised by death. How many are now numbered amongst the reprobate for having deferred their repentance! They said: to-morrow I will put my soul in order; and a sudden death, an unforeseen accident, took them at once out of life and plunged them for ever into hell. Let us follow the

counsel of the Holy Ghost: delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day, lest His wrath should come of a sudden, and in the time of His vengeance He should destroy thee.

EXAMPLE.

Fear of Sin.

On the slope of a hill that skirts the road from Inspruck to Milan, a young girl, named Mary, watched her flock, and chanted a sweet hymn to the Blessed Virgin, her patroness. A director of the chief theatre of Milan, who chanced to pass at the moment, no sooner heard the voice of the young shepherdess, than, stopping his carriage, he drew near the better to hear her. He was enchanted with her melodious voice; never before had he listened to one so sweet, so rich, and of such extensive compass. "What a splendid voice!" he said "How well it would suit the theatre! What an acquisition it would prove!" Thus thinking, he approached the young girl. "Will you bring me to your mother?" he said. "But what will become of my flock?" she replied. "Do not mind about your flock," he said. "I will give you a hundred, a thousand times their value." "Why do you wish to see my mother?" she asked. "To make her happy in taking her out of poverty," he answered; "I wish you to come with me; I will make you the leading singer of Milan, and your fortune is made." "I want not your fortune," she

said, "I could not save my soul in your theatre. I have often heard it said, that one should lose her own soul who makes herself the occasion of sin to others. Therefore do not reckon on me." The director seeing he made no way with the young girl, sought out her mother, who, delighted to discover a means of emerging from poverty, urged her daughter to agree to the proposed arrangement; but neither the pressing solicitations of her mother, nor the dazzling prospects held out by the director could shake her resolution, and she firmly refused. He gave her till the next day to reconsider her decision. What a sad night it was to the poor child! On the one hand, she thought of her aged mother, and she would gladly have taken her out of poverty; on the other hand, she said to herself: "If I accept this offer I trample my baptismal vows under foot, and shall lose my soul." She passed the whole night in prayer; addressing herself now to God, now to the Blessed Virgin, or to her guardian angel, and each time she heard within her conscience something that kept saying to her: "Do not consent; you would be leaving Jesus to go over to Satan." The morning came, the mother returned to the charge. "Have you decided to accept the offers that have been made you?" she said. "No, mother," she replied, "it is impossible." "You shall do it," she said, in wrath; "I insist upon it; I command you." "Mother," she replied, "order me to do anything else, and I will obey you with delight; but I must not offend God, I cannot forfeit my eternal happiness." "Retire," said the mother, in great anger; "go prepare yourself; we set out in an hour's time." The young girl went

away to consider what she should do; suddenly a thought struck her, and she formed an heroic resolution. Having heard it said that the loss of the front teeth makes a complete change in the voice, and deprives it of a great deal of its strength and sweetness, she approached a window and deliberately broke two of her teeth against a projecting stone, after which she returned joyfully to her mother. The mother thought that she had changed her resolution; but the director, already perceiving the change in her voice, and knowing well the cause, was filled with admiration of her heroic courage; he renounced his project, and exhorted the mother not to persecute a daughter so deserving of her esteem and affection. See what a generous sacrifice this girl made in order to avoid sin. How should her example make us blush, we who show so little courage in resisting temptation! (*La Devotion à Marie en Exemples*).

PRACTICE.

The only real evil for us to fear is sin. Sin will deprive us for ever of the sight of God, and keep us out of heaven; sin, one mortal sin, will deliver us over to remorse, to despair, to the never-ending fire of hell. Let us, therefore, fly sin as we would the face of a serpent.

FIFTEENTH DAY.

LIFE OF THE HOLY FAMILY AT NAZARETH.

A BEAUTIFUL spectacle was that presented by the Holy Family at Nazareth. Every virtue reigned there—piety, peace, union, and love of labour. We must not think that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph lived in indolence and idleness; on the contrary, they led a hard and laborious life; humble labourers, simple artizans, they toiled, and gained their daily bread in the sweat of their brow. They knew that all are condemned to labour in punishment of sin, and they conformed themselves to this degree with joy and in a spirit of penance. They fulfilled the irksome duties of their state of life with exactitude and fidelity, and without a murmur or complaint; they offered and referred to God their trials, their labours, and all their actions; they sanctified them by prayer; whilst their hands were employed in work, their souls were fixed on God, and engaged in prayer. They bore with patience and resignation the crosses and afflictions which the Lord sent them; they blessed and adored His divine provi-

dence in all things. Thus, sanctifying the common, ordinary actions of life, the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph attained to that high degree of sanctity and perfection, that merited for them so high a place in heaven.

But, not only by the example of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph are we taught that we can sanctify ourselves in fulfilling the common, ordinary duties of life, we are, moreover, taught the same lesson by the example of Jesus Christ Himself. He was God, He was all powerful; in coming on earth He could have made choice of high and distinguished position, and He chose, instead, a condition the most humble and obscure; He could have wrought miracles, and elicited the admiration of the world by the splendour of His deeds and His virtues, and He shut Himself up in the workshop of a poor artizan; He devoted Himself to the performance of the simplest and most commonplace occupations; He had a right to the obedience of all creatures, and He obeyed the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph. Behold the example set us by Jesus Christ to teach us that in leading a life of poverty, obscurity, toil, and labour, the more conformable is our life to His, and the more

easily, therefore, can we secure our salvation; to teach us, moreover, that true sanctity does not consist in the performance of extraordinary actions, but in the faithful accomplishment of the duties of our state of life, however humble or unimportant they may be.

We can all become great saints by doing nothing beyond what we do each day. Most of the saints did no more than what we ourselves are doing. There was no difference between their actions and ours but the motive and intention. That which we do from mere habit, and from human, earthly motives, they performed through motives of faith and religion; that which we do from necessity, and frequently with repugnance, they performed with joy and as a duty. They referred everything to God, they did all for His glory, according to the precept of St. Paul. How many Christians who have toiled and suffered much during their lives shall, nevertheless, appear before God with their hands empty from not having taken care to offer and refer to Him their sufferings and their actions! Let us then refer everything to God, and do it solely for His glory. Let us say to Him at

the commencement of each day: My God I offer and consecrate to Thee my labours, my trials, and sufferings; I accept them in penance for my sins; I unite them to the trials, suffering, and labours which Thou hast borne for love of me. From time to time during the day renew this offering of your actions to God; thus doing all our works, even those that are the least important will become great and precious in the eyes of God; they will acquire a supernatural merit, and will form one day our glory and our happiness in heaven.

EXAMPLE.

A Christian Family.

It was the year 1812; a general conscription took place, obliging all to join the army who were capable of bearing arms. Amongst the new conscripts were the two sons of a virtuous Christian family. Having each received a medal of the Blessed Virgin, the two young soldiers tenderly embraced their afflicted parents, and set out to join their regiment. The French army, which advanced into the heart of Russia was at first successful; but it was soon destroyed and decimated by the inclemency of the climate, and was forced to fall back and beat a retreat. Having reached the banks of the Beresina, men and horses cast themselves in utter disorder

on the bridges that were hastily constructed, and the shore and bed of the river were strewn with the dead and dying; in the precipitancy of flight, even the wounded were abandoned. Amongst these latter was one of the brothers of whom we speak. A bullet had fractured his shoulder, and left him expiring amidst a heap of slain. In this extremity, he recommended himself to the Blessed Virgin; he took her medal into his hand, pressed it to his heart, and cried with an expiring voice: "Mary! refuge of the unfortunate, have pity on me, come to my help." His prayer was not long unheard. Presently a detachment of the Russian army passed along the bank of the river, and a young officer remarking something that shone on the breast of one of the soldiers lying on the field of battle, approached, and discovered that it was a medal of the Blessed Virgin which the dying man had let fall from his failing grasp; the officer took it up with eagerness, placed it in his bosom, and perceiving that the wounded man still breathed, had him carried to a neighbouring house in order to look to his wounds. Whilst this poor wounded man was thus rescued on the field of battle, his brother, who was ignorant of his fate, was taken prisoner, and was sent away to the interior of Siberia to labour in the mines. There a hard and brutal master daily loaded him with work, and gave him hardly any food. Thus he wasted away from hard treatment and grief. His sole consolation was his medal. Often, when alone, he pressed it to his lips, bathing it with his tears, and exclaiming: "Oh Mary! comforter of the afflicted, help me, deliver me." Mary was not insensible

to his petitions. His master had a son, a young officer, who had been engaged in the late campaign. Friendly relations soon sprung up between the young Russian officer and the young Frenchman; they saw each other every day. One evening as they were together in the officer's apartment, suddenly the eyes of the prisoner became fixed on a certain object; it was a medal of the Blessed Virgin; he approached, gazed upon it, and exclaiming: "Oh, my poor brother!" he fell to the ground in a swoon. The officer hastened to raise him, and as soon as he had recovered consciousness, asked him the cause of his grief. "I had a brother in the army with me," he said; "but, alas! I see plainly that he was slain on the field of battle, for that is his medal." "Take comfort," replied the officer, "your brother is not dead, it was I who saved his life." He then related what has been told already. "It was by my means that the Blessed Virgin was pleased to save your brother, and through me it is that she will save you also; to-morrow you shall be free." The next day at the earliest dawn, the two young friends, mounted on two powerful chargers, set out in the direction of France, and when they were sufficiently distant no longer to apprehend pursuit, the officer stopped, indicated to him the locality in which he should find his brother, and saying: "Adieu, my friend!" "Adieu, my liberator," the prisoner replied, and embracing each other tenderly, they parted in tears.

Shortly after, on the 10th of August, 1813, the two brothers re-entered their home, after being absent from it ten months. It is impossible to give an idea of the joy of this pious family in find-

yet come. Still, to show us that He could refuse nothing to His holy mother, Jesus caused water to be brought, and by an exercise of His omnipotence He changed it miraculously into wine. This changing of water into wine wrought at the marriage of Cana, in Galilee, was the first public miracle of our Saviour, and it was Mary who obtained it by the efficacy of her intercession.

How great is the power of prayer offered to God with confidence and faith! Behold Mary: she prays Jesus to perform a miracle, and Jesus seems to refuse, saying that His time for working miracles was not yet come. Despite this seeming repulse Mary is not discouraged; and Jesus, to reward her confidence and faith, works the miracle which she asks. How efficacious would be our prayers were they offered with the like faith and confidence as that of Mary! But, alas! how far removed are we from such dispositions! When God defers for a time to grant us what we ask, we give ourselves up to diffidence and despondency; we give over praying, and we thus deprive ourselves of those graces which we would have obtained had we but per-

severed in prayer; for very often it is at the moment when we think all hope is over that we are nearest to be heard. If sometimes we obtain not what we ask, it is because we pray badly, and then it is our own fault; or because we ask for what would be prejudicial to our salvation, and then God hears us, not indeed by granting us that which we ask, but other more precious graces. Thus, we ask to be freed from a certain affliction, trouble, or malady, and God, to prove us, allows it to continue; but by reason of our prayers He grants us strength and courage to bear it with patience; and instead of a temporal grace that we petitioned for, and which would have availed but for this life, God grants us a spiritual grace that will bear precious fruits for all eternity. Are we not, then, heard, and even beyond our desires? Let us, then, pray with confidence, let us pray with a strong faith, let us pray above all with perseverance, and undoubtedly we shall obtain every grace of which we stand in need; for God is a kind Father, and ever hearkens to His children when they pray with due dispositions.

EXAMPLE.

Efficacy of Prayer.

Some years since a celebrated preacher, Père Carboy, whilst preaching at Lyons, observed in one of his instructions that prayer offered with a lively faith, especially with a pure and innocent heart, could work a miracle. A young girl of nine or ten years of age who was present at once formed the resolution to ask for the conversion of her father and mother. Next day she sought the missionary, and said to him with tears and a voice broken by sobs—"Father, you said on yesterday that prayer offered with lively faith should obtain a miracle. Ever since I heard you say so I have not ceased to ask for the conversion of my father and mother; I have prayed, I have wept all night, and still my father and mother are not converted." "True, my child," replied the missionary, "I stated that prayer offered with a lively faith should obtain a miracle, but I did not say that the miracle would take place all at once; continue to pray and the miracle will be obtained." As the child had not made her first Communion, the missionary undertook to prepare her for it. Each day she returned, and each time she said: "Father, the miracle has not yet taken place; I pray, I weep before God, I ask of the Blessed Virgin the conversion of my parents, and yet they do not come to hear you. When, think you, will the miracle come to pass?" "Continue to pray," said the priest, "and the miracle will take place." On the day previous to that on which she was to make

her first Communion with some other children, she came according to custom, received absolution with the piety of an angel, and as she returned home with a heart full of joy, thinking of the solemn act that was to take place on the morrow, she met a young cousin who embraced her with emotion, saying, "Bertha, do you not know? Oh! how happy I am! To-morrow, my father and mother are to receive Holy Communion with me." Then the poor child became sad, and her eyes filled with tears. She returned home where her parents impatiently expected her; but, instead of seeing her contented and happy, they saw her come back blinded with tears. "How is this, my child?" they asked; "you said how happy you should be on the eve of your first Communion, and see how sad you are." "I was happy but a moment ago, when I came from confession," replied the child; "but I met my cousin, who embraced me, saying that her father and mother were to approach Holy Communion with her on to-morrow. Then I said to myself: And I shall be alone: I shall not have the joy of seeing my father and mother beside me." "Yes, to-morrow you shall be alone," they answered, with tears in their eyes; "but in a few days you shall renew your first Communion, and we will accompany you to the Holy Table. We shall at once wait upon the priest who has prepared you for first Communion." Next day the victorious child conducted her father and mother to her confessor, saying to him: "Father you were right; the miracle is accomplished." Some days after, she saw them beside her at the Holy Table; she was overwhelmed with joy, all her desires were fulfilled.

Behold here the efficacy of prayer arising from a rightly disposed heart (*Le Messager de la Charité*, 21st May, 1859).

PRACTICE.

It is an undoubted truth that God always hears our prayers when they are performed aright. Let us then pray with faith, with confidence, with attention; let us pray particularly with great perseverance, and we most certainly shall be heard.

SEVENTEENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN ACCOMPANIES HER DIVINE SON IN HIS MISSIONARY JOURNEYS.

JESUS passed the three last years of His life amidst the severest labours, and sufferings without number. Our divine Saviour went continually from village to village, from province to province, to announce His Gospel, dispensing on all sides His graces and favours. He instructed the ignorant, converted sinners, consoled the afflicted, healed the sick, and raised the dead to life; but the more He did good and comforted the unfortunate, the more did the Scribes and Pharisees pursue Him with

their hatred and persecution. They invented against Him the blackest calumnies, they laid a thousand snares for Him, sought to surprise Him, to seize upon His person in order to put Him to death. Several times He had to take to flight to escape their criminal designs. O adorable Saviour, what have you not borne to redeem us, to snatch us from the fire of hell and purchase the joys of heaven for us !

Whilst Jesus thus devoted Himself to the painful labours of His public mission, what happened to His most holy mother ? She shared the toils and sufferings of her divine Son ; she accompanied Him in His evangelical wanderings throughout Judea. Who can say all that this tender mother had to suffer during the three years of the public life of Jesus ? She beheld her beloved Son in the most absolute privation and want ; she saw Him overwhelmed with fatigue and labours, and sorely tried by troubles and opposition ; she heard the calumnies that were charged against Him ; she was aware of the plots of which it was sought to make Him the victim, the continual dangers to which He was exposed ; she knew that the Jews had resolved on

His death, and that they only awaited a favourable moment in order to put their wicked design into execution. What a source of affliction was this to Mary, the most tender and sensitive of mothers! Still she resigned herself to it all, because she knew that it was all directed to our salvation. O sacred mother, Mary, what sufferings have you not endured, what sacrifices have you not made through love of us! Suffer us not to be so unhappy as to forfeit and make useless all that your divine Son and you have suffered that we might be saved.

Jesus and Mary have undergone everything for our salvation, and we do almost nothing. When there is question of some temporal concern we are all anxiety and earnestness; nothing is suffered to impede us; but when it is a matter that regards the salvation of our soul, then all our energy is gone, we have no firmness of resolution, the veriest trifle gives an excuse for omitting it. And yet attention to the affair of our salvation is our one only important concern; it alone can afford us any degree of consolation in this life; it alone can give us confidence at the moment of death;

regarding it alone will God demand an account of us when we appear before His judgment-seat; it alone can render us happy for eternity.

What is it that can afford us something of consolation amidst the trials and crosses of this life? One thing only—attending to the affair of our salvation, for then we shall have the hope that our crosses and trials will not go for nought, but that God will take them into account and recompense them one day in heaven.

What is that that can strengthen us against the fear of death, against the terrors of judgment, when our last moment arrives? Shall it be to recollect that we have been prosperous in life, that we have enjoyed its pleasures and gratified our passions? Oh, no; on the contrary, all that will then be to us only a new cause of regrets, fears, and alarm. What, then, can give us confidence at that terrible moment? One thing only—attention to our salvation, the having thought of it and laboured for it during life. And when we appear before God to be judged, about what shall we be interrogated? Concerning one thing only—the affair of our salvation. “Have you

secured your salvation?" the strict, inexorable Judge will ask us. "Have you attended to it? have you laboured for it?" About this shall we be examined; and woe to us if we have neglected this all-important affair, for we shall then be condemned without mercy, and for eternity, to the most dreadful of all punishments. In fine, the affair of our salvation is the only thing that can render us happy during eternity. To what do all things earthly tend? To death, to the grave. One thing only can follow us into eternity—the affair of our salvation. Let us labour, then, for our salvation; let us do so with earnestness and zeal; let us labour for it to the end of our life, and heaven with all its joys shall be the recompense of our labours and our trials.

EXAMPLE.

The Grace of Salvation.

A prince of one of the reigning families of Germany had been reared in infidelity by an impious and depraved guardian. This irreligion which he had imbibed from the teachings of his master became more and more deeply rooted in his heart with his years. At the age of seventy-one no one could pronounce the name of God in his hearing

without the risk of having him give utterance to blasphemies. A lady who knew him for twenty years, touched by his unhappy state, recommended him to the prayers of the Association of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Some days later this man, who hitherto had never had a pious thought, became as if beside himself. It was grace that had begun to work in him. On Sunday, the 14th of May, he was again recommended to the prayers of the Associates. Thenceforth he could rest neither night nor day. If, overcome by fatigue and want of sleep, he chanced to slumber for a moment, immediately a fearful dream awoke him in affright : it seemed to him as if he was seized and dragged before the judgment-seat of God, there to render an account of his conduct. This thought pursued him even in the day-time, and occasioned him much suffering. Having at some time heard of the extraordinary effects wrought in persons who wore a miraculous medal of the Blessed Virgin, he earnestly asked for one. A medal that had been blessed and indulgenced was accordingly sent to him. He received it with eagerness, kissed it respectfully, and put it into his bosom, saying, "It shall never leave me." On the Sunday following prayers were again offered for him, and several Communion were offered for his intention. From that time peace was restored to his soul, and his rest became sweet and tranquil. But the Blessed Virgin, who desired his salvation, accorded him much greater favours. One night he felt himself awakened gently ; he opened his eyes and saw his apartment filled with a brilliant light. Struck with astonishment he sought an explanation of the

phenomenon, when a lady of noble, majestic mien, with a countenance full of sweetness and dignity, clothed in white, advanced towards him and said that it was time that he should cease to commit sin ; that if he died in his present state he should be lost for all eternity ; but if he became converted and approached the sacrament of penance, God would bestow a happiness upon him that should never end. At these words the lady disappeared, and all became dark again. Next night he was favoured with the same vision, and received the same warning ; and the same was repeated on the third night, but she added that she had come for the last time ; let him pay due attention to the advice she gave, for that his salvation depended upon it. She then disappeared, and he saw her no more. Vanquished by these wonders, he asked for a priest to instruct him in the Catholic religion, made his confession, received his first Communion on his seventy-second birth-day, and, completely changed under the miraculous care of Mary, became as gentle and humble as he had hitherto been arrogant and passionate. He wished to return to his native land in order to reanimate the faith of his fellow-countrymen by relating the favour he had received from the Blessed Virgin ; but God was satisfied with his good intentions, and he died before the end of his journey (*Manuel de l'Archiconfrérie*).

PRACTICE.

We are on earth only to save our souls ; if that be not done, then all is lost to us. What will avail us all the goods of the world if we are damned ?

Of what use to have enjoyed pleasures here on earth if we have to burn eternally in hell? Would to heaven we were never born rather than that we should be lost for all eternity!

EIGHTEENTH DAY.

SORROWS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS.

MARY followed her Divine Son when He ascended Calvary, and was present during His last moments at the foot of the cross. When a mother assists at the death of her child, she tries to do all in her power to mitigate the throes of his last agony; she lavishes every care and attention on him; she smoothes his pillow; she gives him remedies to lessen his sufferings; she evinces her affection by locking him in her arms, and bathing him with tears, and the poor mother thus finds some solace in her trouble and her sorrow. But Mary on Calvary had not this consolation; she beheld her Son fastened to the cross, suspended between heaven and earth, enduring the most dreadful torments, and she could not comfort Him; she saw Him all bruised and covered

with wounds, and she could not stanch the blood nor bind up His wounds; she heard Him cry in desolation: "My God, my God, why has Thou forsaken me?" and she could not fly to His assistance; she heard Him again exclaim: "I thirst!" and she could not give Him a drop of water to assuage His parching thirst; and not only had she not the consolation of having it in her power to comfort her beloved Son, but she had the additional sorrow to endure of seeing Him insulted and outraged in the most inhuman manner. She heard all the blasphemies, all the imprecations which they uttered against Him, all the sacrilegious mockery which they heaped upon Him; she saw His executioners exult in his sufferings, and drench His mouth with vinegar even whilst He was agonizing. Finally, Jesus expires on the cross after three hours of dreadful torments, and Mary has the added grief to see Him outraged after death, to see His heart riven with a spear. Oh, who could recount all the agonies of Mary on Calvary at the death of her Divine Son? Truly then was accomplished in her the prophecy of the venerable Simeon, her maternal heart was transpierced

by a sword of sorrow. Every sigh of Jesus on the cross, every outrage offered Him, every blow, every wound that rent His adorable body, were so many strokes of the sword that pierced and lacerated the heart of His tender Mother. No, never was there sorrow like to that of Mary on Calvary. She suffered more than all the martyrs together, say the holy Fathers; therefore has the Church styled her the Mother of Sorrows, the Queen of Martyrs, titles which she richly merited by all the sufferings which she endured on Calvary at the foot of the cross.

If we would be true Christians, let us imitate Mary, let us follow Jesus to Calvary, carrying our cross after Him. The cross is the way to heaven, the way of the elect; by that way have all the saints walked, and even Jesus Christ Himself. He took up His cross in the manger, in the stable at Bethlehem, in being born in suffering and poverty; and He carried it all His life-time up to His death. Therefore, He only recognises as His disciples those who carry their cross after His example. "He that taketh not up his cross," He says, "and followeth me, is not worthy of me, cannot

be my disciple." We must then bear our cross if we would be disciples of Jesus Christ. Besides, in vain would we seek to avoid the cross, we shall meet it everywhere.

Whatever side we turn, wheresoever we abide, we shall always have to endure either bodily sufferings, or mental pain; and consequently we shall always have our cross to bear. It is found in every state and condition of life. Each has his own; no one is exempt. We sometimes repine at the weight of our cross; it seems to us that another would be more supportable, and that we could carry it with more courage; this is an error, an illusion. God knows best what is proportioned to our strength, and most suitable for us, and the cross that comes to us from His hands is sure to be the most profitable and useful for us. It is this that will sanctify us, provided only that we bear it with patience and resignation; for, to be holy, it is not enough that we have crosses, it is necessary, moreover, that we make a good use of them. Two men were on the cross on each side of Jesus on Calvary, the good and the bad thief. The former bore his sufferings patiently and with resignation, and he is

saved, Jesus promised that he should be with Him in paradise. The other, on the contrary, was impatient, murmured against his fate, ceased not to give utterance to blasphemies and imprecations, and he is lost, and in hell. Let us, then, sanctify our crosses by bearing them after Jesus, uniting them with that which our Divine Saviour has borne for love of us, and thus we shall render them not only more meritorious, but also more light and easy.

EXAMPLF.

Cure obtained through a Novena.

For many months, Sister St. Cecilia, a young religious, languished on a bed of suffering. After trying all the resources of their art, the physicians declared her malady incurable. At first, a pain commencing in the ankle of the right foot, spread by degrees through the whole leg and side, sores were formed all over her body, or rather it became one general sore; the flesh mortified, and exhaled such an offensive odour, that even the sick person herself was overcome and swooned from the effects of it. She could not bear any nourishment: all her support consisted of a biscuit steeped in water, and even that she could not take without bringing on a vomiting of blood. With all her dreadful sufferings, she never uttered a complaint; when

they became more intense than usual, she took her crucifix, and pressed it to her lips, saying: "My God, whatever Thou wilt; Thou hast borne much more for me." On the approach of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1855, the entire community resolved to perform a novena in honour of the Blessed Virgin, in whom the invalid had the most unbounded confidence. On the 7th December, the vigil of the feast, her sufferings increased, at midnight they became unbearable, and in that dreadful state she remained until two o'clock in the morning. At two, the sick person, overcome with fatigue and pain, fell into a deep sleep. Her sleep, that before had been so disturbed, was calm and peaceful. At six she still slept; it was the hour of the Community Mass. They came to carry her to the tribune of the chapel, where she was, according to custom, to receive Holy Communion; when, behold! Mary had heard their prayers; she was cured. She no longer felt the least pain; her foot, leg, and side, were free from all swelling, the livid colour had disappeared, her sores were completely healed, the infectious odour was gone, and the blood once more circulated healthily through the hitherto diseased parts, and restored to them their natural heat. Her first word was one of gratitude and love to Mary, her august benefactress. She at once arose from bed, took her clothes and then without help proceeded to the chapel. At the end of the corridor she perceived the mother superior, and ran to her crying—"Mother, mother, I am cured! the Blessed Virgin has cured me!" The superior was filled with emotion, in which the whole community soon

joined ; they repaired together to the chapel, where they prayed with renewed faith. Sister St. Cecilia took her place with them, heard Mass kneeling, communicated with the others, assisted at vespers and benediction, took her food with the sisters without experiencing any inconvenience, and joined in all the exercises of the house without feeling the least fatigue. The physician, struck with astonishment, was forced to acknowledge that this extraordinary cure was effected by the all-powerful hand of God (*Le Vœu National of Grenoble*).

PRACTICE.

Of whatever kind be the crosses that God sends us, let us receive them with submission, and bear them with patience and courage. Only on these conditions can we be accounted true Christians, and thus only will Jesus Christ recognise us as his true disciples; in a word, it is by fulfilling these conditions that we can hope one day to enter heaven.

NINETEENTH DAY.

JOY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT THE RESURRECTION OF HER DIVINE SON.

ALTHOUGH the Gospel does not relate that our Saviour manifested Himself to his Holy Mother immediately after His resurrection,

yet we cannot reasonably doubt that it was so. The love He had for this tender mother, the respect He entertained for her, the reverence He had ever evinced towards her, all tend to make us believe that He hastened to visit her, to console her in her troubles and her sorrow. She had been with Him on Calvary; she had shared all the sufferings and ignominies of His Passion; it was, therefore, most just that she should first participate in the joy of His resurrection. What, then, must have been her joyful delight when she beheld her beloved Son arisen, clad in glory and immortality! What sweet intercourse, what holy communings during these forty days that she had still the happiness of passing with Him on earth! How fully was she solaced for all the cruel anguish which she had endured on Calvary! Thus does God ever proportion His graces and consolations to the trials and sufferings which we bear for His sake.

Great though the joy of Mary was, yet, like all the joys of earth, it was of but short duration. . On the fortieth day after his Resurrection, Jesus, accompanied by His Holy Mother and his apostles, proceeded to Mount Olivet, and there, in their presence,

and having bestowed upon them His last benediction, He ascended into heaven, and there took possession of a throne of glory on the right hand of God His Father. Oh! who can recount the sentiments of Mary, when she was constrained to part from her beloved Son and receive His last farewell! How she would have wished to be able to accompany Him and ascend with Him to heaven to share His happiness and glory. Consequently, though her body still remained on earth, it may be said that her heart and her soul went up to heaven with Jesus. Wholly detached from the things of this world, she sighed only for the possession of the goods of eternity. Thither all her thoughts, all her desires, all her affections were directed.

After the example of Mary, let us hold ourselves detached from the things of earth, and aspire only after the true and solid goods of eternity. What, in fact, is there that should attach us to this life? This life that is so full of misery and tribulations, its goods so uncertain, its honours only a vapour, its pleasures so momentary and leaving but regret and remorse after them. And even if the goods of this life

were real, as they are in truth only false and deceitful, what would remain to us of them at death? how much of them could we bring with us to the other world? Nothing, absolutely nothing; nothing shall accompany us thither except our vices and our virtues, our sins and our good works; we shall bring nothing thither but the joy and the peace of a good conscience, if we have lived well, or the bitter sorrow and regret of having lost our souls, if we have lived badly. Yes, though we should have been during life the poorest and most unfortunate of men, if we save our soul and gain heaven we are most happy; it is all gain and success for us. For all eternity we shall be encompassed with the most ineffable happiness and delights. On the other hand, though we should have enjoyed all the good things, all the honours and pleasures possible here below, if we have neglected our salvation and lost our soul, we are supremely unhappy; everything is lost to us and lost for ever. For all eternity we shall be a prey to the most dreadful sufferings and the most unbearable torments. Insensate then, a thousand times insensate, he who thinks only of the

perishable things of this life, and allows his affections to be absorbed by that which must soon be left behind, that which death will quickly snatch from him, and neglects the salvation of his soul, the only true and solid pursuit that can render him eternally happy in heaven !

EXAMPLE.

Sacrifice for the Faith.

In March, 1842, a young man presented himself to M. Desgenettes, curé of Notre Dame des Victoires, Paris. He was about twenty-five years of age, in tattered garments, almost barefoot, yet there was perceptible about him something that indicated high rank. "What would you wish me, my friend?" said M. Desgenettes. "Monsieur, I am a Russian; I come from Varsovia." "And why have you come to Paris?" "I am a Catholic, and I have fled to Paris, because they were about to persecute me to make me renounce my religion." This young man was in truth the son of a Russian prince attached to the person of the Emperor. His family, who designed him for a diplomatic career, had given him a brilliant education. Already for some years he had occupied a position in the Government of Varsovia, when a Catholic lady put into his hands The Manual and the Annals of the Confraternity of the Sacred Heart of Mary. He read them with interest; his eyes were opened, he saw the error in which he had

been reared, and became convinced that the Catholic was the only true religion. He accordingly abjured the Greek schism and was received into the true Church. For a year he had professed himself a Catholic, and lived in the strict fulfilment of his religious duties, when suddenly one day a friend came hastily into his office and said: "Sergius, do you know what is about to take place?" "What?" "The Government have determined to arrest you forthwith, and conduct you under escort to St. Petersburg, because you are a Catholic. One who has seen you communicate at the church of the Dominicans has betrayed you." Struck with terror at the thought of the horrible persecution which he knew he should have to endure, the young prince immediately left his office, fled from Varsovia, and on foot, without passport or money, he directed his course towards the Church of our Lady of Victories, at Paris. "She is my mother," he said to himself; "to her I owe my conversion, and she will be my help in my misfortune." In this hope, and having changed clothes with a poor countryman, the better to cover his flight, he traversed Poland, Prussia, and France, travelling twenty leagues a day, and stopping only to take a little rest at night in an outhouse and frequently in the open fields; finally he reached Paris, and prostrated himself before the statue of Our Lady of Victories, thanking his august protectress for having preserved him from persecution for his faith; but unknown and without means, what was to become of him? Mary, in whom he placed his trust, did not desert him. She inspired him with the thought of presenting

himself to M. Desgenettes, who full of admiration for the courage and virtue of the pious young man, placed him in a religious house. There he spent some time considering his vocation, and then decided on embracing the ecclesiastical state, in order to devote himself to the foreign missions. Thus did this young nobleman, rich, talented, and highly accomplished, sacrifice his fortune and his earthly prospects, abandon family and country, renounce all the honours, pleasures, and goods of this world, to save his soul and preserve his faith. What an example for us who are so tardy in making the least sacrifice for the salvation of our souls! (*Extract from the Archives de l'Archiconfrérie.*)

PRACTICE.

Call to mind the nothingness and short-lived nature of the things of this life. Alas! how are we blinded! We attach ourselves to the perishable goods of this life that will so soon slip through our hands, and we forget eternity, that dread eternity upon which we shall enter perhaps to-morrow. Where is our reason? Where is our faith?

TWENTIETH DAY.

THE LAST YEARS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

ACCORDING to the most commonly received opinion, Mary lived nearly twenty-three

many years have we already passed on earth? And are we on that account more perfect and more virtuous? Time flies rapidly, and presently we shall find ourselves unexpectedly come to the end of our career. Oh! let us not waste time that is so short and precious. The bitterest regret of the lost souls is to have misused time. If it were permitted them to return to life, how they would profit of the opportunity to do penance, to labour for their salvation! But that opportunity, that shall never be given to the damned, God gives to us; we have time still at our disposal. Let us turn it to account to secure our salvation, to prepare ourselves against the time when we shall have to appear before that dread tribunal, where we shall have to render an account of all our thoughts, all our words, all our actions. We should be terrified to have to give a rigorous account of a single day; what then shall it be to account for so many months, so many years, for a long lifetime? Even Job, that just man, trembled when he thought of the judgment of God. "What shall I do," he exclaims, "when God shall rise to judge? and when

he shall examine, what shall I answer him?" (Job, xxxi. 14).

If the just man shall scarcely be saved, as St. Peter says, what shall become of the sinner and the wicked? The way by which we shall be prepared to appear with confidence before God in judgment is to anticipate it, and judge ourselves now, and to say often to ourselves: Would I be content to appear before the judgment seat of God after doing this act, after uttering this word, after dwelling upon this thought, after consenting to this desire?

EXAMPLE.

A Young Girl Interred Alive.

The person of whom we speak was called Juliet, and was employed as lady's maid to a duchess. Without altogether losing her faith, she amused herself, after the example of her mistress, by turning into ridicule the ceremonies and most sacred mysteries of our holy religion. She fancied that in acting thus, she should be regarded as a person of courage and strong mind, as if there could be courage and strong-mindedness in mocking God and his saints. They found her one day, dead and cold in her bed. The physician was brought, attested the fact of her death, and next day at nine o'clock in the morning she was buried. The un-

happy girl, however, had only fallen into a lethargy, and the same day towards evening, having recovered her consciousness, what was her astonishment to find herself enveloped and bound in a sheet so that she could not move! She made an effort to free herself, but in vain; she found herself hemmed in on every side between four planks. "Where am I?" she cried, "have they thought me dead and buried me?" She cried aloud, but no one heard her; she listened, but no sound struck her ear; she looked, but saw nothing but a dark and frightful night; she could no longer doubt she was in a tomb, laid amongst the dead. There was she to end her existence, without help or consolation, in slow and dreadful agony. This thought sent a chill of fear through her frame; but, presently, a far more terrible thought presented itself to her mind; she called to mind the sins of her past life, her blasphemies, her impious and sacrilegious mocking of holy things; she saw God ready to judge her, hell yawning to engulf her, and the devils eager to drag her to torments. A cold sweat bathed her whole body. "O my God," she exclaimed, "pardon me my sins; I am heartily sorry for them; would that I could blot them out with my blood! Holy Virgin, the refuge of sinners, help of the afflicted, come to my help, take me out of this tomb, rescue me from amongst the dead, and I promise that I will atone in tears and penance for all the evil I have done." Prayer calmed her a little, but presently, exhausted by all the efforts she made to free herself, she again became unconscious. Mary, however, had heard her prayer. The grave-digger, happening to pass the way and

hearing her cries, set himself to open the grave. There he found her on her bier, her body all torn and bloody, her hair scattered about, and the winding-sheet rent and displaced. As soon as he loosed her to ascertain if she still lived, she heaved a deep sigh, opened her eyes, made an effort to arise, and cried out—"O my God, I thank thee!" They bestowed on her all the care that her state required, and in a few days she was almost quite restored to health. She recounted all she had undergone during the long hours she had been in the tomb; then after dividing between the gravedigger and the poor all the money she possessed, she entered a convent of the Ursulines, there to do penance for the sins of her past life, and to prepare herself to appear before the dread judgment-seat of God, to which she had already been so near (*Sabatier De Castres*).

PRACTICE.

Often call to mind that terrible judgment where we shall have to render an account of all our thoughts, words, and actions. Surely, if even the saints trembled in contemplating this fearful judgment, we have reason to tremble at it! Let us prepare for this judgment by judging ourselves severely, and by leading an edifying and Christian life.

TWENTY-FIRST DAY.

DEATH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

At length the moment drew nigh when all the desires of the Blessed Virgin were to be accomplished, when that tender mother was to leave this valley of tears to be united for ever to her Divine Son in heaven. It is related that some days before her death, an angel appeared to her, holding a palm-branch, and announced to her the termination of her exile. How full of joy she must have been at this happy announcement. How earnestly did she thank the Lord for it! The moment of her death being come, she consoled the faithful who pressed around her, she encouraged them to perseverance, promised to be their advocate and protectress in heaven as she had been their mother and their refuge on earth, and having imparted to them her blessing, she resigned her soul into the hands of her Son, and slept peacefully on the bosom of the Lord. It was neither the effects of sickness nor the decay of nature, nor the decrepitude of age, although she died at an advanced age, that severed the bonds which

held her soul united to her body, it was solely the fire of divine love. All aflame with this sacred fire, her beautiful soul detached itself, without an effort, from her virginal body, and was transported in triumph into heaven, even to the foot of the throne of the Eternal. Such was the precious death of the Blessed Virgin. Oh ! would that ours might be in anywise like to hers ! But, let us remember that to die a holy death like Mary, we must live holily like her ; for a happy death is the recompense of a good life.

Although God had, by a special privilege, preserved Mary from original sin, He willed not to preserve her from the death of the body, which is the penalty of that sin ; He, on the contrary, willed that she should undergo it, like the other children of Adam, to show that the sentence of death is universal and irrevocable ; to render her also the more conformable to her Divine Son, who, very God that He was, still would submit, through love for us, to the most humiliating death, to the death of the cross ; finally, the Blessed Virgin died to teach us by her example how we ought to dispose ourselves for our last moment. Mary's

whole life was a preparation for death. From the first dawn of reason to her last sigh, she never ceased to dispose herself for it by an angelical purity, by detachment from creatures, by an ardent love of God, and by the practice of every virtue. Thus death had nothing painful or sorrowful for her. Full of a tender confidence and burning with the desire to be united to Jesus Christ, her Divine Son, she passed tranquilly from this mortal life to the possession of a happy eternity, as one falls into a gentle sleep.

Like Mary, we should continually prepare ourselves for death. This was the occupation of all the saints whilst on earth; they did nothing else than prepare themselves to die well; and, after passing long years in tears, fasting and penance, they feared that they had still not done enough. And what are we doing towards preparing for that terrible moment which will decide our eternal lot? Everything, in fact, depends on the moment of death. If we die in the state of grace, we are secure of being eternally happy; if, on the contrary, we die in the state of mortal sin, we shall be miserable, accursed, reprobates for eternity.

Oh ! let us not await the moment of death to prepare ourselves for it : it will be then too late, but let us prepare for it all our days. Let us pass each day as if it was the last of our life ; let us frequently examine our conscience to ascertain if we be in a state to appear before God ; let us often say to ourselves : If death occurred to me now, should I be well prepared ? should I have nothing to reproach myself with ? Would I be content to die in my present state ? If our conscience be not at peace, if it reproach us with some fault with which we would not be satisfied to appear before the tribunal of God, let us hasten to extricate ourself from that state by having recourse to the Sacrament of Penance ; let us never rest contentedly in sin, for death may surprise us at any moment. We cannot count on youth, nor strength, nor health ; death occurs at every age. “ Be you always ready,” Jesus Christ says to us, “ for you know not the day nor the hour. At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come.”

EXAMPLE.

St. Francis De Sales delivered from temptation through the Intercession of the Blessed Virgin

St. Francis De Sales, at the age of seventeen, was at Paris for the completion of his studies, when God allowed him to experience a trial the most painful to a tender and loving soul such as his. The devil endeavoured to persuade him that all he did for God was useless, as his reprobation was inevitable. God, who wished to teach him from personal experience the compassion that should be felt for those similarly tempted, seemed as if He abandoned him and left him a prey to the assaults of hell. In this impenetrable night, no ray of divine light reached him, no consoling thought came to give him comfort. In vain he implored heaven for help; heaven appeared as if closed against him, and his God seemed as if deaf to his prayers. No more hope of one day possessing that infinite beauty which heretofore had been the dearest object of his desires, hell alone presented itself to him with its dreadful eternal solitude, where God is never seen; where there can be no love of Him; where on the contrary, the heart abhors and hates Him, and the mouth blasphemes Him without ceasing! Francis could not contain himself at the thought of this; he lost his appetite and rest, and his health visibly declined. The freshness and beauty of his countenance faded away like a lily which a poisonous wind has breathed upon and withered; his eyes became sunken, and he was reduced almost to a skeleton. There was no more that amiable playfulness that

had made him so engaging to all who knew him; the society of even his nearest friends was distasteful; absent and care-worn in mind, he sought for solitude, which, when he found it, only tended to make his sorrow the more unendurable. If he thought of opening his heart to some friend, the load indeed would have been lightened, but the shame of the avowal closed his lips even with regard to his tutor, who loved him tenderly, and who asked him in vain the cause of this sad change. He continued nearly a month in this state, exciting the pity of all, and causing the utmost anxiety to his friends. A little time more and the young Francis would have died; but God, satisfied with having proved him, inspired him with the thought of going to the Church of Notre-Dame-des-Gres, where he had before made his vow of chastity, and the first object on which his eyes rested was the statue of the Blessed Virgin. At sight of it, a feeling of confidence sprung up anew in his afflicted heart; he cast himself at Mary's feet, and looking upon himself as all unworthy of directly addressing God, he besought her to obtain for him of God's mercy the favour that if he was so unfortunate as to hate Him in the other life, he might be allowed to love Him with all his heart in this; he then recited the *Memorare*, shedding a torrent of tears. This touching petition, so far removed from the dispositions of a reprobate, moved the heart of Mary to compassion, and Francis at once experienced the happy effect of the protection of her whom the Church with so much justice styles the Comforter of the Afflicted. Hardly had he ended his prayer than he felt as a

were a mountain removed from his heart ; a gentle light dissipated the cloud that had enveloped his soul, joy and delight succeeded to black grief, he quite recovered his cheerfulness, his health returned, and from that day forth the peace which he had obtained through the Blessed Virgin was never disturbed.

PRACTICE.

Think often that we shall soon have to die. Yet a few years, perhaps but a few days, and all shall be over with us ; we shall have rendered our account to God, and our eternal lot shall have been decided. O moment of death, how terrible art thou ! I will think of it, I will prepare myself for it.

TWENTY-SECOND DAY.

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

AFTER her death, Mary was wrapped in a shroud and placed in the tomb, but she remained not long there ; for, according to the universal belief, she arose after the example of her Divine Son, on the third day, glorious and triumphant from the dead. A venerable tradition handed down to us from age to age, from the time of the apostles, informs us that the body of the

Blessed Virgin was carried to Gethsemani, and there interred amidst the chants of the angels and the apostles; that during three successive days delightful music was heard in the air; and that on the third day, the chanting having ceased, St. Thomas, the only one of the apostles who had not assisted at the death and burial of the Mother of God, having arrived at Jerusalem, earnestly begged to be allowed once more to contemplate and venerate her who had borne the Saviour of mankind. Yielding to his entreaties the apostles opened the tomb, but the body was no longer there; they found in it only the shroud and drapery in which the body had been wrapped, and which shed around a sweet odour. Struck with astonishment at the sight of this mystery, the apostles reclosed the tomb, convinced that the Divine Word, who had vouchsafed to become incarnate in the immaculate womb of Mary, had not permitted her chaste body to be subject to corruption, but had raised it to life and transported it to heaven, to be at once admitted to a participation of her beatitude and glory. Yes, it is the unanimous belief of the Church that the Blessed Virgin was assumed both

body and soul into heaven. It is not an article of faith, but yet it is a truth so universally acknowledged, that to call it in question would be an act of the greatest temerity.

God would grant this glorious privilege to Mary to render her the more conformable to her Divine Son, who remained Himself but three days in the grave; and also to recompense her inviolable purity, preserved unstained to the end; this privilege was accorded her to honour her virginal body, become by the Incarnation of the Word, the sanctuary of grace, and the temple of the Divinity; and finally God bestowed this favour upon her to give us in the resurrection of His Holy Mother, an assured pledge of our own future resurrection.

It is an undoubted truth that we shall rise again one day. All, great and small, the just and the sinner, all shall reassume the same bodies which we now have, and shall appear both body and soul before the tribunal of the sovereign judge. And if, by virtues and good works, we have merited to be of the number of the just, not only shall our soul be happy and glo-

rified for all eternity in heaven, but our body also shall share in its glory and beatitude. On the contrary, if we be so unhappy as to be numbered with the reprobate, not only shall our soul be condemned to suffer eternally in hell, but our body also shall share in its sorrows and sufferings, as it had partaken during life in its guilty and criminal pleasures. "The hour cometh," says Jesus Christ (John, v. 28, 29), "wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God. And they that have done good things, shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." Oh! since our body is destined to arise again one day, let us ever hold it in respect and never sully it by sin. We venerate the temples of God, and would shudder to profane them. But "Know you not," says St. Paul (1 Cor. 6, 19,) "that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost?" and "if any man violate the temple of God; him shall God destroy" (1 Cor. iii. 17). And again the same Apostle says (1 Cor. vi. 15), "Your bodies are the members of Christ." What horrible profanation that of making the members of Jesus Christ the instru-

ments of crime and iniquity ! Let us then keep our bodies free from all sin, from all impurity, that on the day of general resurrection they may arise glorious from the grave, and be admitted to participate in the joy which the bodies of the just shall possess in heaven.

EXAMPLE.

Devotion of St. Stanislaus Kostka to the Blessed Virgin ; how it was rewarded.

From the most tender age, St. Stanislaus Kostka had a great devotion to the Blessed Virgin which increased with his years. During his noviciate in the Society of Jesus, he made it his special study to become acquainted with those sayings of the saints and passages in their writings that treated of the praises of Mary, and that were most calculated to give a high idea of her power and greatness. He had also a custom, at the commencement of each action, to turn in the direction of a church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, in order to ask her blessing. Mary, in return for this filial love, bestowed on the young Stanislaus the precious gift of an angelical purity ; if he heard an expression of an indelicate nature he forthwith swooned away. He was sure to obtain all that he asked through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, both for himself and for his fellow novices, who had come to understand the efficacy of his prayers.

Before he joined the Society of Jesus he fell dangerously ill, and seemed on the point of death. He had received the Holy Viaticum through the ministry of angels, having asked in vain for the attendance of a priest in the house of a Protestant where he happened to be lodging. He awaited only his last moment, when of a sudden he was favoured with a heavenly vision; he beheld the Blessed Virgin approach him with a countenance of inexpressible sweetness, bearing in her arms the infant Jesus. She addressed Stanislaus in words of the utmost tenderness, consoled and encouraged him; then placing her Son upon the bed she allowed Stanislaus to caress Him. Stanislaus was so transported with joy that he would not have relinquished his hold of the Divine infant; but Mary withdrew Him saying: "My son, your hour is not yet come; you must merit the possession of Jesus by faithful obedience to His will." She then disappeared, leaving Stanislaus so much improved, that he was soon in a condition to go to a church to thank God for the favour he had received.

In his last illness Stanislaus was favoured with another vision of the Blessed Virgin. He had long desired to die on the feast of the Assumption, and had implored this holy mother to obtain for him this grace. His prayer was heard. He was seized with a fever, and five days before this feast he was so ill that he had the last Sacraments administered to him. After receiving the Holy Viaticum and having invoked the intercession of the saints, he gave himself to silence and recollection; then it was that Mary came to seek her child and to con-

duct him to Jesus. She appeared to him surrounded by a numerous retinue of virgins, clad in robes of dazzling whiteness. "Come with us, Stanislaus," she said to him; "it is time to quit this land of sorrow; come to share with us the eternal joys." At these words he expired, and his innocent soul ascended to heaven to enjoy during eternity the society of Jesus and Mary.

PRACTICE.

We shall all rise again on the last day; this is an article of faith; the resurrection shall be an occasion of joy and consolation for the just, but one of terror and consternation for sinners. Which shall it be for us? Let us examine our conduct and reflect.

TWENTY-THIRD DAY.

CROWNING OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN IN HEAVEN.

MARY entered heaven not like the other saints; she entered it as Mother of God and as queen of angels and saints. All paradise was moved on her arrival; the whole heavenly court advanced to meet her, to felicitate her, and to render her their homage as to their sovereign. Jesus Christ himself came to receive her, he put her

in possession of her glorious throne on His right hand ; he placed upon her brow the double crown of virgins and of martyrs ; he put a sceptre into her hand and said : **Reign, O My Mother ! reign eternally over the angels and saints, and all creatures. Behold my graces and my treasures ; I place them at your disposal. Bestow them upon your clients, your children, and your faithful servants. Then was accomplished in heaven the prodigy of which St. John speaks in the Apocalypse : “ A great sign appeared in heaven ; a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars ” (Apoc. xii. 1).** This wonderful woman invested with such splendour, is the Blessed Virgin, crowned by her Divine Son, queen of angels and of men. Behold now this humble virgin, this poor mother, lately so despised and slighted upon earth, so deluged in sorrows on Calvary, so persecuted during life, behold her now in the bosom of God, surrounded with honour, disposing at pleasure the treasures of heaven, seated upon a throne the most elevated in heaven, next to that of her Divine Son, and none but the Divinity itself above her. What glory for Mary

to find herself thus powerful and exalted ! What consolation for us ! for we know that the more powerful and exalted she is in heaven, the greater is her compassion for her unhappy children on earth, the greater is her desire to bestow upon us marks of a tender parent's love. But how has Mary attained to this height of glory and power ? By her fidelity to grace and by the practice of every virtue. Let us, then, imitate this blessed mother, let us practise the virtues which she practised on earth, and then we shall, one day, share in her glory and beatitude in heaven.

Yes, we are all called to reign hereafter with Mary in heaven ; but to reach that blessed abode we must strive and labour for it. Heaven is a recompense, therefore it must be merited ; it is a crown, therefore it must be won ; it is a kingdom, therefore it must be conquered. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi., 12). This is the prize for which the saints suffered, the thought of which urged and cheered them on to victory. They "had trials of mockeries and stripes, moreover, also of bonds and prisons ; they were stoned,

they were cut asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword" (Heb. xi., 36, 37). Others wandered "in deserts, in mountains and in dens, and in caves of the earth" (ibid. v. 38), having no other food than roots and wild fruits; others were loaded with chains, clothed in hair-cloth, had their bodies tortured, and watered the earth with their tears and their blood. Behold what the saints have done and suffered to get to heaven. And what have we done hitherto for this end? Where are our struggles and our victories? Where our works of penance and mortification? No doubt it is hard to wage a continual war on self. "But if the labour affright you," says St. Augustine, "let the recompense encourage you." This recompense shall be great and magnificent beyond expression. "The eye hath not seen," says St. Paul (1 Cor. ii. 9), nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him." There "death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow" (Apoc. xxi. 4). There there shall be happiness infinite, unalterable, and unending; there shall our heart be fully sa-

tisfied, all our desires perfectly realised ; there all shall be joy supreme and all satisfying, secured for all eternity.

EXAMPLE.

The Sceptre of Mary.

The seminary of Sables-d'Olonne, in the diocese of Luçon, was placed in an especial manner under the protection of the Blessed Virgin ; it had chosen her as its mistress and sovereign, and in that quality had made her an offering of a silver sceptre, as a symbol of royalty. This seminary had been some years thus placed under the special guardianship of Mary, when, on the 27th December, 1835, at about two o'clock in the morning, the entire community were aroused from sleep by the cries of "*Fire ! fire !*" We can readily imagine the tumult and confusion caused amongst the pupils and other inmates on finding the building in flames. Some ran to save their effects ; others to seek refuge from the fire ; others again ran into the town to alarm the inhabitants, and summon them to their aid. The darkness of night, the lurid glow of the conflagration, the clanging of the tocsin sounding for help, the clamour that was constantly on the increase, all tended to add to this scene of desolation. The whole town turned out to rescue their seminary from destruction : but already the fire had destroyed three apartments and had seized on the timber work of the pavilion situate on the north. To add to the misfortune, there were neither the appliances nor a sufficient supply of

water at hand to extinguish the flames. And, moreover, the wind blew violently from the north, and sent showers of sparks from the burning pavilion on to the main portion of the building. In vain did the intrepid workmen mount the blazing walls, exposing themselves to danger of death in order to prevent the fire from extending ; all their heroic efforts were unavailing. The entire seminary would infallibly have become a prey to the flames, when, by an inspiration from heaven, the superior ran to the statue of the Blessed Virgin, fell on his knees before it, reminded Mary that she was the queen and mistress of the house, and supplicated her to come to their assistance. He then arose full of confidence, took the Sceptre of Mary in his hand, and cast it into the midst of the flames, where they burned with the greatest violence. Never was faith more promptly recompensed ; on the instant the wind changed, and bore the flames in an opposite direction ; presently they got the fire under control and the seminary was saved. One of the first cares was to search for the sceptre, though with little hope of being successful. What was their delight to find it at length, quite uninjured, and only sullied by the fire. The community entered into an engagement to observe a solemn procession for three years on the anniversary of the event in honour of the Blessed Virgin, and as an act of thankful recognition of her maternal assistance ; and a picture was designed, representing the building in flames, and the Queen of Heaven arresting the fire by waving her sceptre in the direction (*Mickaud*).

PRACTICE.

We can all aspire to heaven, and are called to it; but in order to attain to it, we must labour for it and merit it; we must fight our way to it and win it; for the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and it is only those who exercise a holy violence over their evil propensities that can hope to bear away the prize.

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY.

PROFOUND HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

THAT which Jesus Christ says of himself may be also applied to his most holy mother — “Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart” (Matt. xi. 29). Yes, Mary was ever truly humble in heart and mind. Her whole life was a constant exercise of the virtue of humility. The more it pleased God to exalt her and load her with favours, the more did she study to be lowly and humble. An angel was sent to announce to her that she was chosen to be the mother of the Saviour, and so far from being elated by the glorious announcement,

she replied with humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The angel told her that she was "full of grace," and "blessed amongst women," and she was troubled at his words, his praises gave the alarm to her humility. "She would never have been troubled," says St. Bernardine, "if the angel had told her that she was wicked and a sinner."

In her quality of Mother of God, Mary might justly claim the respect and homage not only of men but also of angels and saints; and yet, without a thought of her eminent dignity, she set out in haste to visit her cousin Elizabeth; she was the first to salute her and humbly to offer her services. Therefore it was that, filled with astonishment at her readiness and modesty, Elizabeth exclaimed in admiration: "Whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 43).

At Bethlehem, at the birth of Jesus, Mary saw herself repulsed and despised; but far from complaining of it or being offended at it, she, on the contrary, took occasion from it to abase and humble herself the more. Behold her again in the temple on the day of her Purification.

What modesty ! what humility ! She knew that in giving birth to the Son of God she had contracted no stain, and still she goes through the form of Purification as if she had been impure ; she knew that she was the Mother of the Eternal, of the Almighty, and yet she identifies herself with ordinary mothers ; she was the Queen of Heaven, and contents herself with making the offering of the poor. She avoids with care all that could distinguish her in the eyes of men. She sought not to appear or to be elevated above others ; she, on the contrary, sought only the lowest place, and to remain unnoticed and unknown. But it was not outwardly only that Mary showed herself meek and humble ; she was so much more in the very depths of her heart ; for it is in the heart that true and solid humility is to be found. She not only submitted willingly, to contempt and humiliations, she even desired and sought them ; she was, in a word, the most humble of all creatures ; and for that reason it was, say the Holy Fathers, that she was raised to the sublime dignity of Mother of God. How far removed are we from these holy dispositions of Mary !

Mary sought only humiliation and abase-

ment, and we think but of how we shall obtain notoriety and human applause. And all the time what have we to be proud of? "What hast thou," says St. Paul (1 Cor. iv. 7), "that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory?" In truth, what have we of our own but sin, misery, and nothingness? "Wherefore, God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James, iv. 6). But in proportion as pride is hateful to God, so is humility pleasing in his sight. Humility is a virtue so precious in the esteem of God, that Jesus Christ himself came down from heaven to teach it to us. "Learn of me," He says, "because I am meek and humble of heart." And not content to teach us this virtue by His words, He instructs us in it by His own example: He is humility itself; He annihilated Himself; He suffered injuries, insults, and calumnies; He died the most ignominious of deaths. Humility is so indispensable a virtue, that without it we cannot be saved. "Unless you become as little children," says our Saviour, "you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). Let us then, ever, think lowly of ourselves,

by bearing in mind that we are nought but weakness and misery, but dust and ashes; let us accept willingly every humiliation that God sends us; let us not pride ourselves on our riches, talents, or endowments; let us never despise any one, but always think others better than we are; finally, let us, like Mary, study to be humble and to shun the vain applause of the world, and God, who delights to raise up the humble and lowly, will give us a high place in his eternal kingdom.

EXAMPLE.

Pride vanquished.

A certain lawyer, aged thirty-two, had naturally a fiery and overbearing disposition; but in place of combating the spirit of pride that possessed such dominion over him, he, on the contrary, fostered and flattered it. Thus this sad propensity had become to him an occasion of continual trouble and torment. He could not brook the slightest contradiction; the merest trifle put him in a rage. One day, having set his heart upon the attainment of a certain object, he met with an insurmountable obstacle that frustrated the accomplishment of his desires. He became as if delirious with anger, he shed tears of passion, and his whole frame trembled violently. Being thus unable to proceed on his way, he sought some place where he could rest. It was about three o'clock in the evening, and the

church of Notre Dame des Victoires was at hand. He entered, and found it empty; he advanced to the chapel of the Blessed Virgin and cast himself on his knees, though not at all through devotion. Looking up to the statue of the Blessed Virgin, he cried out in an impious tone: "You who are called the Consoler of the Afflicted, help me if you have the power to do so." Mary deigned to hear this prayer, all-unworthy though it was. Scarcely had he spoken, when he felt his trouble and agitation greatly diminished. Presently he was seized with a new access of passion; and again, and a third time did he address himself to the Blessed Virgin. "You who are the consolation of the unhappy," he said, "look with pity on me." After remaining nearly an hour in the church, he returned home; but what was his astonishment to find on the mantelpiece of his chamber the *Imitation of Christ*. He knew that he was not possessed of a copy of this book, and no one could have placed it there in his absence, as he had locked his door when going out, and had taken the key with him. He took up the mysterious volume, and opening it at random, read these words: "In what things a man has more sinned, in those shall he be more heavily punished." He was struck with this sentence, and applied it to himself. What, he said, was the cause of the tortures I endured to-day? It was my pride, and I was punished in that by which I had the more sinned. He paused a little, and then taking up the book and opening it as before, he read: "It is by resisting his passions, and not in becoming their slave, that a man shall find true peace of heart." These words were to him as if a

warning from heaven. He at once resolved to combat and conquer his pride. For that end he continued to implore the aid of the Blessed Virgin, and by means of prayer and determined efforts, he completely succeeded, and became as humble and gentle as he had heretofore been proud and imperious.

Like this young man, let us ask the assistance of Mary in conquering our evil propensities, and we shall surely triumph if we pray with perseverance, and make the necessary efforts for that end (*Manuel de l'Archiconfrerie*).

PRACTICE.

Let us be ever humble and gentle, accepting willingly such humiliations as happen to us; repressing the feelings of self-love that spring up in our heart; subduing irritability and testiness, which are the fruits of pride; bearing patiently to be told of our faults, and applying ourselves to their correction.

TWENTY-FIFTH DAY.

FIRM AND UNFALTERING FAITH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

As the humility of the Blessed Virgin was profound and sincere, so was her faith proportionately firm and unfaltering. With

humble simplicity she believed truths even the most difficult of belief. An angel, on the part of God, announces to her the most unheard, the most inconceivable of mysteries; he announces to her that she is to become the Mother of the Eternal, the Omnipotent. Undoubtedly, Mary did not understand this mystery; still at the word of the angel she believed without hesitation, because she knew that God can neither deceive nor be deceived, and that when He proposes a truth to us, we should believe it without reasoning upon it, even when it exceeds our feeble intelligence.

When the time of her delivery was come, Mary brought forth her Divine Infant at Bethlehem, born in a poor stable; she beheld Him feeble, suffering, and subject to the like miseries and needs as other children; and yet, despite this poverty and apparent weakness, she recognised Him as her Saviour and her God. She saw Him for thirty years living in the greatest obscurity, performing nothing remarkable or extraordinary; she saw Him employed as a simple mechanic, a poor artizan; and still, notwithstanding this life of obscurity and retirement, she revered and honoured Him

as the Creator of the universe, the Eternal and Almighty God. She saw Him during His Passion, insulted, outraged, buffeted, covered with spittle, crowned with thorns, deserted by His apostles, and condemned to die on an infamous gibbet between two malefactors; and yet, with all these indignities and ignominies, Mary recognised Him as the King of glory, and the Redeemer of mankind. Finally, she beheld Him dying in agony on the cross, she beheld Him taken down and laid in the tomb; and still she believed Him immortal, and that He shall presently rise again full of life and glory, to subdue the entire universe to His Gospel and His dominion. Oh Mary, how great is thy faith! Nothing is capable of disturbing it, neither the abasement of a God born in a stable, nor the opprobrium of His Passion, nor His cruel death on the cross; thou art superior to every proof, thou believest unwaveringly despite every trial. Oh, how does the firmness of thy faith condemn the weakness of ours! But Mary's faith was not only firm and immovable, it was also a practical and living faith, she faithfully observed all the commands of God. What attention to her prayers! what

recollection in the house of God! what patience and resignation under trials and sufferings! what charity towards her neighbour! what tender love for God! what hatred of sin! what zeal and earnestness in the fulfilment of every duty!

In such trials and temptations as our faith may be exposed to, let us call to mind the constancy and firmness of that of Mary. Like her, let nothingshake our faith, neither the difficulties that may present themselves to our minds, nor the sneers of the ungodly; let us never be ashamed of our religion and our title of Christians, for Jesus Christ has said in His Gospel (Matt. x. 13), "He that shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in heaven." Especially, let us manifest our faith in our good works and conduct, for it is not enough for salvation that we have faith. "The devils believe," says the apostle St. James (Ep. ii. 19), still they are in hell. To attain to heaven we must practise as well as believe. How many Christians shall be rejected at the last day, not for want of faith, but for not having practised what they believed! Of what advantage for us to believe that there is a hell where souls

suffer unspeakable torments, if we take no care to avoid it; to believe there is a heaven where those who dwell there are sovereignly happy, if we labour not to secure ourselves the possession of it? Let our life then be in conformity with our belief; concerning ourselves seriously about our salvation; strictly fulfilling all our duties; in a word, showing forth our faith in the practice of good works, without which our faith will avail us absolutely nothing before God; or rather it will only serve as our accuser and will be the means of our greater condemnation.

EXAMPLE.

Faith rewarded.

A pupil of the seminary of Versailles, named Peter Renaud, had become, from the effects of very great bodily sufferings, completely blind. His eyelids had shrunk back, leaving exposed the ball of the eye that was immovable like that of a statue. The pupil had even become so insensible, that it could be touched with the finger without causing the slightest effect. He had, moreover, a disease of the heart, from which he suffered dreadful agony. The physicians who attended him declared, that not only should he never have his sight restored, but that he should necessarily die of the disease.

For three days and three nights the poor patient endured sufferings that drew from him cries that were heart-rending. Touched by his sad condition, the professors and pupils determined on making in his behalf a novena to the Blessed Virgin, towards whom he entertained a great devotion ; and, accordingly, it was begun on the 4th April, 1845. The following Saturday, the sick person got into a state of extreme weakness, and his malady assumed a most dangerous aspect. He was unconscious, his eyes fixed and wide open, he seemed hardly to breathe. Believing his last moment had come, they hastened to administer to him the sacrament of Extreme Unction. Whilst this was being done, all the community were assembled in the chapel, engaged in earnest prayer for him. About a quarter of an hour after he had been anointed, the patient recovered consciousness, and declared that he no longer was in pain ; he even wished to arise from bed. During the following days he was able to join in most of the public duties of the house. He was cured, but was hopelessly blind. The novena was to end on the 12th April ; he prepared himself by fervent prayer, and confessed and communicated at the community Mass on that morning. God, however, who willed to prove his faith, did not yet restore him to sight ; but, far from losing heart, he continued to pray to the Blessed Virgin, and with redoubled fervour ; he recommended himself to the prayers of the Archconfraternity of Notre Dame des Victoires, and on the 14th April, the second day after the termination of the novena, he determined on approaching again the Holy Communion at the Mass of the community. At the moment of re-

ceiving the adorable Body of Jesus Christ, he heard a voice that said : " Dost thou believe? Dost thou believe?" " Yes, Lord, I believe," he replied. " I believe that Thou canst work a miracle. Thou hast deprived me of sight ; I believe that Thou canst also restore it to me." His faith was quickly rewarded. On the instant that the consecrated particle was placed on his tongue, his sight was restored, and he was able to return to his place without help, though up to a few moments before he could not take two steps without being led by the hand. To test the extent to which his sight was restored to him, he took up the *Imitation of Christ*, and though the print was quite small, he read it without difficulty. After Mass, he ran to the sacristy and cast himself into the arms of the superior, who could not restrain his tears of joyful surprise. Great was the enthusiasm, when, during recreation, he joined his two hundred fellow students, recognising them and addressing them by name. His poor mother being told of his miraculous cure, hastened to the seminary to assure herself of it, but, overcome with emotion, she fainted away. All these facts occurred in the presence and to the knowledge of over two hundred witnesses, who can testify to their accuracy and truth (*Extract from Report, made to the Bishop of Versailles by the Superior of the Seminary*).

PRACTICE.

Let us ever believe, with firm, undoubting faith, all the truths of our holy religion ; but let us, more-

over, carry them out in practice, for faith without good works is only a dead faith, that will be of not the slightest profit to us in gaining heaven.

TWENTY-SIXTH DAY.

FERVENT LOVE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN FOR GOD.

THE whole life of the Blessed Virgin may be said to have been one continued act of the love of God. From her coming to the use of reason, as soon as she was capable of knowing God, she devoted herself to His service, and loved Him with her whole heart. Very different from so many Christians who, after giving to God the years of early youth, afterwards desert Him for the sinful pleasures and disorders of the world, Mary never withdrew from Him. The more she advanced in years the more fervently and faithfully did she serve Him. After the Incarnation of the Eternal Word in her womb, she increased in fervour and piety; her spirit of recollection became more profound, her prayers more ardent, her union with God more intimate and per-

fect. But it was particularly after the birth of Jesus, her Divine Son, that her fervour and devotion shone forth most brightly. With what zeal did she consecrate herself to God her Saviour! with what earnestness did she devote her life to His service! She lived and laboured but for Him. What sufferings did she not endure for His love! From the moment when she gave Him birth at Bethlehem to that in which He expired upon the cross, she never ceased to give Him proofs of her tender and devoted love. She shared all His labours, all His sufferings, all His humiliations. In His Passion, when everyone turned against Him, insulted and outraged Him; when even His disciples and His apostles deserted, denied, and abandoned Him, she followed Him to Calvary, she stood by His cross and watered it with her tears, and there, too, would she have died of grief and love if not for a miracle of Providence. After Christ's ascension into heaven the love of the Blessed Virgin assumed a new phase, and became all the more intensified. Unceasingly occupied with the thought of her Divine Son, her life was a continued prayer and meditation. She dwelt amongst the angels rather

than amongst men. At length, consumed by the sacred fire with which her soul was inflamed, she expired, according to sacred writers, from the effects of her love of God, and passed to continue in heaven this exercise of charity which had been her happiness and delight upon earth.

If we but loved God as Mary loved Him, we should find in it our happiness and consolation. And why should we not love a God who has loved us so much? He loved us from all eternity, before the world began; He preserved us by His gifts and graces. All that we possess, whether in the order of nature or of grace, comes to us from Him. Our body with all its members, our soul with all its faculties, it is He who has conferred them upon us; He it is who preserves, supports, and sustains us. But He has done far more for us in the order of grace: He came down from heaven, became man, suffered the bitterest torments, died on the cross, and thereon poured out even to the last drop of His Blood for our salvation. Not content to have sacrificed Himself in order to save us, He has also in His Sacraments left us an inexhaustible source of graces; He has chosen to remain

Himself amongst us in the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist, as a Father amidst his children, to be our refuge, our support, and our consolation; and finally, He promises us hereafter eternal happiness in the kingdom of His glory. In return for all these precious favours He asks but one thing only—that we love Him. Oh! should we not be the veriest ingrates were we to withhold from Him our love? Let us, then, love Him with our whole heart, before all things, preferably to all creatures; let us refer all our actions to Him, avoiding all that would displease Him, and be ever disposed to do and suffer all things for His love—in a word, let us faithfully observe all His commandments, for it is in the faithful fulfilment of His holy law that genuine charity consists.

EXAMPLE.

Triumph of Grace.

In the French army sent to Rome after the revolution of 1848, to reinstate the Holy Father in his dominions, there was an officer whose wife was a Protestant. This lady, though brought up in error, was possessed of all the qualities of a good mother. She had two sons, aged ten and twelve years,

whom she carefully trained to virtue. Some days before the return of the Pope to Rome she desired to see the apartments prepared for him ; and having expressed this desire to her husband, he at once conducted her to the Vatican Palace, accompanied by her two children. After inspecting the principal apartments they reached the private chapel of the Pope. As soon as she entered, perceiving the *prie-dieu* of the Holy Father, she cast herself on her knees in devotion, and with her head buried in her hands, poured out a short but fervent prayer. According to a happy practice which she had been long accustomed to observe, although opposed to her religious training, she recommended her two children to the Blessed Virgin ; and having ended her prayer, she raised her eyes to heaven. But, to her amazement, she beheld over the altar a lady clad in dazzling white, holding her two children by the hand, and at the altar the Pope himself, who seemed to regard her. Struck, moved to tears by so strange a spectacle, she looked around to convince herself that her sons were still at her side. Remarking her emotion, her husband asked her the cause. "Oh, it is nothing," she replied ; "it is only a passing indisposition." The recollection of the apparition, however, never ceased to haunt her. On the 12th April following, the day on which the Pope re-entered Rome, she hastened to the Church of St. John Lateran, where the Holy Father was to make his first visit. No sooner did she see Pius IX. than she perfectly recognised every feature. But how much more was her surprise increased when she saw above him the same lady whom she had seen at the Vatican, and

who held as before her two children by the hand ! She was so filled with emotion at the sight that everyone thought her to be taken suddenly ill. She, however, gradually obtained the mastery over her feelings, and, as on the former occasion, kept the occurrence a secret. But a third assault of grace was reserved for her. Some time afterwards, all the officers' wives being admitted to an audience by the Sovereign Pontiff to receive his benediction, this Protestant lady presented herself, accompanied by her two sons. Having blessed the children and given to each a chaplet, the Pope proceeded to bless the mother, when all at once she was favoured for the third time with the same miraculous apparition, and with the same attendant circumstances as on each of the former occasions. This time she was completely overcome ; she passed the following night in sighs and tears. Finally grace triumphed in her heart ; she yielded to its salutary influence, and on the 17th May she solemnly abjured the errors of Protestantism and embraced the Catholic faith, in which she experienced such peace and consolation as she had never known before (*Extrait de plusieurs journaux*).

PRACTICE.

Never forget that we are placed here on earth but to know, love, and serve God, and that if we love Him not in this life we shall burn eternally in the next. O my God, I desire to fulfil Thy holy commands !

TWENTY-SEVENTH DAY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN'S ADMIRABLE CHARITY
TOWARDS HER NEIGHBOUR.

THE great love which the Blessed Virgin had for God rendered her exceedingly charitable towards her neighbour; for one cannot truly love God without loving his neighbour, who was formed according to His image and likeness and was ransomed by His Blood. Mary practised this amiable virtue all through her life. Never was she heard to utter a word prejudicial to the character of her neighbour; never did she suffer herself to blame or criticise his conduct; never did she give offence or wound the feelings of any one. Ever affable and mild towards all, she avoided with care all that could give pain to others; she bore with their peculiarities and defects, compassionated their sorrows, consoled them in their afflictions, assisted them in their necessities, and rendered them kind services in every way. Severe towards herself and indulgent towards others, Mary never formed injurious suspicions or rash judgments about her neighbour; she never con-

demned them on slight grounds, on the contrary, she sought to excuse them; and if excuse was impossible, she left the matter in the hands of God, who penetrates the secrets of hearts, but she judged them not herself. O admirable conduct! how should we always study to imitate it, and yet how rarely do we succeed in doing so!

The charity of Mary was universal and excepted no one. Persons often deceive themselves with regard to the fulfilment of the precept of charity; they flatter themselves they possess this virtue, whilst hatred and rancour against certain fellow-Christians lurk at the bottom of their hearts. This is a fatal delusion. True charity makes no exception; it requires of us to love all mankind, even our enemies, for God and in God; to be ready to do good to those who do us evil, and to pray for those who hate and persecute us. Mary has also given us an example of this sublime charity. A mother can have no more bitter enemies than those who put to death her only son, the object of all her affections. Now, on Calvary, Mary beheld the executioners who were inflamed with cruel hatred against her Divine Son, who fastened Him to a cross by

piercing His hands and feet, who shed His Blood to its last drop, and put Him to death in the most protracted and cruel manner; and yet so far from invoking vengeance and giving expression to her abhorrence of these inhuman monsters, she prayed for them, she interceded for them, and begged of the Eternal Father grace and pardon for them, saying, like Jesus Christ Himself: "My God, pardon them, for they know not what they do." A Mother praying and asking pardon for the murderers of her Son; what admirable, what heroic charity!

How far removed from such charity as that of Mary are we, who have such difficulty in forgetting and pardoning the slightest offences! How little does our conduct resemble hers! Ever indulgent towards ourselves and severe upon others, we shut our eyes to our own faults and have them ever intently fixed upon the defects of others. So soon as we perceive or fancy that we detect something censurable in the character or conduct of our neighbour, we burn with impatience to make it known; we blame and criticise him; we impute unworthy motives to him, entertain injurious suspicions about him, and judge and condemn

him on the slightest grounds. What a severe judgment in consequence shall we have to undergo when hereafter we shall be arraigned before the judgment seat of God ! For Jesus Christ has said in His Gospel, "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. . . . For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke, vi. 37, 38). Let us, then, be ever indulgent towards our brethren if we would have God so towards us. Let us never judge and condemn them lightly and on first appearances. On the contrary, let us study to surround their acts with the robe of charity, and God, who is charity itself, shall deal mercifully with us when we appear before His tribunal.

EXAMPLE.

The Charitable Soldier.

In the year 1826, a brave soldier, who was in garrison at Metz, met one day at the corner of the street a young boy of nine years of age, who was crying bitterly. "Why do you cry, my child ?" he said. "Oh ! I am very unhappy," replied the boy. "What makes you so ?" "Within the last few days I have lost both my father and mother, and

now I have no one and know not where to go." The kind-hearted soldier was touched with compassion; so, taking the child by the hand, he brought him to a place of shelter, and, paying for his support in advance, said to the owner of the house, "Take care of this child for me, and be kind to him." Having got the address of the priest of the place from which the boy said he had come, he wrote to him at once and received the following reply: "Alas! what the child states is only too true. He has neither father nor mother. Send him to us; perhaps we shall be able to find some charitable soul who will undertake the care of the poor orphan." The soldier at once replied that he charged himself with the care of the boy, that he adopted him, and would do what he could to supply towards him the place of his lost parents. Having completed just then his term of service, he re-engaged that very day for a second term, by which he secured a sum of 1800 francs. Then hastening to the master of a public school he handed him the money, saying, "This is to pay for six years the pension of this child, who is my adopted son; give him a good, religious education." He then went to a church, and prostrating himself before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, "Holy Virgin," he said "I consign and consecrate to you my child; take care of his soul, I will take care of his body; he is friendless and an orphan, be a mother to him." At the end of a year the soldier came to see his adopted child, but alas! what a cruel disappointment! The boy was reported to him as idle, disorderly, and vicious. "Take your child," said the superior, "for I can make nothing of him, and he is upsetting the

whole school." The soldier reflected an instant, grief painted on his countenance and great tears coursing down his cheeks—"O sir," he said, in a voice broken with sobs, "keep him, I beg of you, for six months more; I hope that God will have pity on him and me, and that he will come to be better disposed." The superior consented, and the pious soldier went once more to throw himself at the feet of Mary. "O Blessed Virgin, you forget," he said, with frank, military simplicity, "I entrusted this poor child to you, and asked you to be a mother to him, and yet you leave him to perish! I have sold myself to provide for him, and you are not taking care of his salvation! Oh! once more I implore of you not to forsake him; watch over him, and make him virtuous and dutiful, and I will pray to you and love you always." In the course of another year the soldier returned again. Mary had heard his prayer, the boy had quite reformed, and had even become by the regularity of his conduct a source of edification to all the house. Later on he entered college, and finally had the happiness to become a priest, in which holy state he was a model of piety to his brother priests as he had previously been to his fellow students. Happy child to have met with this charitable soldier! Happy soldier to have fulfilled the offices of charity towards this poor, friendless child (*L'Abbé Connac*).

PRACTICE.

Be always full of charity towards your neighbour. Shun all that would wound his feelings or harm his reputation; bear with his peculiarities

and his defects; readily pardon him any injury he may do you; render him kind service when the occasion offers; in a word, do all towards him that you would have done for yourself, and you will thus fulfil the precept of Jesus Christ, who commands us to love our neighbour as ourself.

TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY

VIGILANCE WHICH THE BLESSED VIRGIN EXERCISED OVER HERSELF.

ALTHOUGH she was exempt from original sin and from proclivity to evil, still Mary exercised a constant and careful vigilance over herself. She watched over her heart, her thoughts, words, and actions; she guarded her senses so as to shun every occasion of sin. Ever prepared against a surprise from the enemy, she trembled at the slightest danger, distrusted herself and her own strength, and had recourse to every means to keep her heart pure and innocent. Wholly engrossed in the duties of her state of life, she lived in strict seclusion and recollection; never left home except to visit the Temple or to discharge the offices of charity; shunned the world, and frequented the society only of the wise and virtuous.

She spoke little, and her words were marked by modesty and reserve; all her conversation was of heaven. Never was she seen unoccupied, for she knew that nothing is more dangerous to virtue than idleness. When her hands were not employed in work she gave herself to prayer and the study of the sacred writings, in which was her chief happiness and delight. She was as mortified as she was active and laborious; her moderation and self-denial were unequalled—it might have been said of her that she took food only to keep from dying; and in her choice of food she selected nothing with a view to gratify the palate, but everything the simplest and plainest. She gave but little time to sleep, as much only as was necessary to recruit her strength. She never sought to gratify self, but, on the contrary, studied to mortify the flesh, to crucify and keep it in subjection. She especially practised interior mortification; bore in a spirit of penance and for love of God every trial and affliction that heaven sent her. Thus did she advance daily more and more in the way of sanctity and perfection; and thus did she attain to the high degree of glory which she now possesses in heaven.

How different our conduct is from that of Mary! "Mary has nothing to fear," says St. Ambrose, "and she fears all things; and we who have everything to fear, fear nothing." Mary had no propensity to evil, and she constantly watched over herself; and we who are so frail and so prone to sin, observe scarcely any precaution—often we even go into occasions and expose ourselves to the danger of sin. Is it, then, to be wondered at that our falls are so frequent and so grievous? Let us, then, watch over ourselves; over our heart, to root out from it every attachment that is not according to God; over our mind, to repress every evil thought, every culpable desire. Let us keep watch over our eyes, by avoiding all dangerous glances; over our tongue, by never uttering anything that could wound charity or disedify our neighbour; in a word, let us keep guard upon all our senses, for it is through the senses that sin finds entrance into the soul. Let us avoid all dangerous occasions, and frequent the society of those only whose conduct is pious and edifying; let us avoid idleness, as the parent of all vice; finally, let us add prayer to vigilance, according to

the precept of Jesus Christ—"Watch ye, and pray," He says to us, "that you enter not into temptation" (Matt. xxvi. 41). By observing these precautions we shall avoid sin, we shall persevere in virtue, and shall secure our eternal salvation.

EXAMPLE.

A Courageous Act.

It was the year 1831, a period when the practice of religion was but little attended to in the colleges of Paris, especially in the military school called the Polytechnic. One of the students in this school in walking through one of the halls found a beads. "A beads in the Polytechnic!" he said, picking it up; "how strange! Is it possible that any one amongst us recites the beads? Oh! it is incredible—impossible!" In his opinion it was a disgrace to recite the beads. He therefore determined to turn into ridicule the virtuous young man who had remained faithful to Mary. It was the close of the scholastic year, and each of the pupils was preparing for his examination. The general examination was presided over by a distinguished man, one of the veteran marshals of France. Amongst the students was one who particularly distinguished himself by the cleverness and knowledge he displayed, and also by his bearing—so full of gravity and intelligence, but, at the same time, of sweetness and modesty. When the exercises were over, and before dismissing the pupils, the Marshal had

them put in rank and inspected them in the ordinary playground of the establishment. Towards the conclusion a young man suddenly stepped out from the ranks, and, holding up a beads, cried out in a jeering, insulting tone, "Who has lost the beads? Who is the fool, the booby, that says the beads?" He judged that whoever it was that had dropped the beads would not venture to claim it, and thereby expose himself to the ridicule of his comrades; but hardly had he done speaking when a young man quietly advanced and said, in a firm, collected tone, "The beads is mine; be kind enough to give it me. My mother gave it to me when leaving home for Paris, and I promised her to keep it and recite it whilst I live." The young student who thus spoke was the same who had made such a brilliant examination. The old Marshal advanced to him, and seizing him by the hand, "Young man," he said, "I congratulate you on what you have done; you have shown that you have courage equal to your talent. Be always as ready to defend your religion and you will secure the esteem of every upright man." All the pupils applauded these noble words, and many of them who had been restrained by human respects, feared no longer to practise their religion openly. Let us, like this young man, show ourselves faithful servants of Mary, and she on her part will bless us and bestow abundant favours upon us (*Rosier de Marie*, 12th June, 1858).

PRACTICE.

Observe a constant vigilance over yourself, in order to keep from sin; guard your heart, your senses, your imagination. Remember that a moment of forgetfulness and incaution may prove your destruction.

TWENTY-NINTH DAY.

INVIOABLE PURITY OF THE BLESSED
VIRGIN.

PURITY, decorum and modesty, were the fairest ornaments of the Blessed Virgin. In her tenderest youth she consecrated herself to God by a vow of perpetual chastity, and never did she do aught that in the slightest degree infringed this solemn engagement. Purity was ever her privileged virtue. We can hardly estimate how highly she prized this angelical virtue, how much she dreaded anything that should tarnish it, and what precaution she took to maintain its most perfect observance. She knew that chastity is amongst the virtues as the lily is amongst flowers, that its sensitive delicacy is tarnished by the least adverse breath, and,

accordingly, she avoided with the utmost care all that could affect it with the slightest taint; she shrunk from even the appearance of evil. Thus, at the mere presence of the angel, she was troubled and alarmed; and when the angel proposed to her to become the Mother of the Saviour, she would not accept this sublime dignity until she had received the assurance that her divine maternity should be nowise incompatible with her virginal purity. Thus did she prefer the glory of virginity to that of being the Mother of God, the Queen of Heaven, and Sovereign of the universe. What a love of chastity! Oh! no, none ever loved this holy virtue as Mary loved it. Virgin by choice and inclination, it was in chastity that she centred all her happiness and delight; Virgin in body and mind, her thoughts, desires, words, acts, and feelings, breathed innocence and sanctity; Virgin before she became a mother, Virgin after bringing forth her Divine Infant, she was ever the chastest, the most pure of virgins, and so shall be for all eternity. Thus it is the Church styles her the Holy, the Blessed Virgin, the Virgin by excellence, and the Queen of Virgins; and even when address-

ing her by her title of Mother of God, she still adds that of Virgin, because she knows full well that nothing is more pleasing to Mary than that august quality. It is, in truth, her brightest crown and her most glorious title.

But if the Church so frequently reminds us of the inviolable purity of Mary, it is not only that we may admire this sweet virtue, but, yet more, that we may be induced to practise it. Whatever be our state and condition in life, we are all bound to be chaste and pure. Jesus Christ has imposed it upon us by a formal and rigorous precept; and not only does He forbid all acts that are contrary to purity, but also all thoughts and desires that would wound this angelical virtue. St. Paul forbids even the naming of the opposite vice amongst Christians, to show us how abominable it is in the eyes of God. There are few crimes that God has more severely punished than this, even in this life. We have terrible examples of this fact recorded in the Sacred Scriptures, where we find Him never allow it to go unpunished. But it is in the next life that He will most severely deal with it. It is there that He shall pour out all

the vials of His wrath on those who have given themselves up to this shameful vice; there shall they be plunged in a sea, an ocean of fire, from which they shall never escape. Let us, therefore, avoid with care all that would tend to draw us into this accursed sin. Think not that you can be too careful on this point, you cannot be enough so. Let us watch over our thoughts, our words, our attachments; let us keep guard over all our senses, that there may be never anything in us contrary to purity; let us frequent the sacraments of Penance and the Blessed Eucharist; let us practise sobriety and mortification; let us fly all dangerous occasions, for were we even saints and angels of purity, if we expose ourselves to danger we shall infallibly perish in it; the word of God says so. Finally, let us have recourse to prayer, saying often with the holy king David: Create in me, O Lord, a right spirit, a pure heart, a heart ever disposed to fulfil Thy holy law.

EXAMPLE.*A Fate and a Warning.*

In 1604, in one of the Flemish cities, there were two young students, who, instead of applying them-

selves to their studies, abandoned themselves to an irregular and licentious life. One evening, when they were together as usual in some of their haunts of crime, one of them, named Richard, begged his companion to come away, and when he refused, Richard left and returned home alone. As he prepared for bed, he recollected that he had not yet recited certain Hail Marys which he had, notwithstanding his evil courses, been hitherto faithful in repeating every day. He was so overcome with sleep, he found the utmost difficulty in going through his customary prayers. Having, however, somehow repeated them, he lay down and fell asleep. But, almost on the moment, he was awakened by his door being shaken violently. He sat up in bed, and listened. Presently the door opened, and he saw his companion enter, pale, disfigured, like a spectre, who advanced towards him, and said: "Richard, do you know me?" "What!" replied Richard, "is it you, my friend? But what is amiss. You frighten me. Is it a joke that you are playing?" "Ah! woe's me!" cried the poor wretch; "the time for joking is past. I am damned, and for ever. In leaving the scene of our crimes, I was struck with a sudden death; my body lies in the street, and my soul is buried in hell. The same fate was to have been yours; you were included in the same sentence; but Mary took you under her protection in return for the poor honour you used to pay to her. Happy will you be if you take advantage of the warning which she has given you to-day." Pronouncing these words, the spectre disappeared. Richard, half dead with fright, cast himself on the floor, and with his face to the earth, fervently thanked his

protectress. Whilst considering what he should do in changing his life, he heard the bell sounding for matins at the Franciscan Monastery. At once his resolution was taken. "Thither it is," he said, "that God calls me." He went forthwith to the convent and asked to be received. The monks, who had heard of his disorderly life, refused him admittance, but, on hearing what had happened during the night, they consented to receive him. Two of the religious went to the place indicated to ascertain the truth of his statement, and there, in fact, they found the corpse of his unfortunate companion, stretched in the street. As to Richard, he was received into the community, and there became a model of every virtue. In the end, he went to the Indies to bear thither the faith of Jesus Christ, and from thence to Japan, where he ended his life by a glorious martyrdom (*Glories of Mary: St. Liguori*).

PRACTICE.

Entertain a sovereign horror of the sin of impurity. Have recourse to every precaution to preserve yourself free from this accursed vice; you cannot be too careful in avoiding a sin so abominable in the eyes of God, a sin that sends millions of souls to hell.

THIRTIETH DAY.

THE TRIALS AND SUFFERINGS OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

NEXT to Jesus Christ, no one ever underwent so much of earthly suffering as the Blessed Virgin. Her entire life was but a continual succession of afflictions, trials, and sacrifices. At Nazareth, at Bethlehem, in Egypt, in each and every place, she met with the severest trials, and the bitterest and most poignant sorrows. Jesus, who so often wrought miracles for the relief of the unhappy, never did so to avert sufferings from His holy Mother. On the contrary, it might be said that events were so disposed as that she might have the more to suffer; never was she relieved of her cross; God willed that her life should be a long and painful martyrdom. Why did Jesus assign this lot to His Divine Mother? Oh! it was because He loved her with an infinite love that He thus subjected her to those severe trials; it was because He would elevate her in glory above the angels and saints that He permitted these accumulated

sorrows and afflictions to come upon her. It is thus God treats the souls whom He most dearly loves; He proves them severely in this life, in order to recompense them generously for ever hereafter.

But the keenest and most painful of all the dolours of Mary was that which she experienced on Calvary at the death of her Divine Son. There she had before her the most overwhelming spectacle that could present itself to the eyes of a mother. She beheld her beloved Son extended, nailed on a cross; she saw Him all over bruised, bloody, and disfigured, His brow crowned with thorns, His sacred face covered with spittle, His hands and feet transpierced, His whole body, from the sole of His feet to the top of His head, showing one continuous and ghastly wound. For three hours she had this heartrending spectacle before her eyes. Her soul was bowed down in anguish, deluged with grief, and yet not one word of murmur or complaint escaped her lips, no feeling of anger or impatience arose in her heart; her perfect submission and conformity to the will of God rendered her mute and wholly resigned.

Alas! how far are we from copying after

the patience and resignation of the Blessed Virgin! So soon as we have anything to suffer, we forthwith complain and murmur and become impatient, and thus we lose the fruit of our trials and our sufferings. Yet, we must endure trials if we would gain heaven. The Holy Scripture tells us that it is through many tribulations we are to enter into the kingdom of God. Therefore, the greatest saints are those who have suffered most, and been the most severely proved. Besides, we shall never have as much to suffer as we deserve. Had we committed but one mortal sin during our life, we merited to suffer for it eternally in hell. When that is so, how can we repine and think our lot too hard if we have to suffer for a few years in this life? Instead, then, of murmuring and complaining, let us support with patience and resignation all such afflictions as God in His mercy sends us. Let us unite our sorrows and crosses to those which Jesus Christ endured for us, and thus render them meritorious. Let us, also, offer to God, in penance for our sins, all the little trials and annoyances which we meet with nearly every day, such as illness, contradictions, cutting words, the disagree-

able ways of those with whom we have to live, the inconveniences of heat and cold, and the like. Such things as these, borne in patience, and for love of God, afford to us opportunities of meriting much for heaven, and means of expiating and making satisfaction for our sins to the Divine Justice. "Oh! how sweet it is to suffer," says St. Bernard, "when by it, we merit a happiness that shall endure for ever, and we escape the sufferings that shall never end!"

EXAMPLE.

Heroic resignation of a Christian Mother.

Monsignor Pellerin, Vicar Apostolic in northern Cochin China, relates a deed of heroism worthy the first ages of the Church. A cruel persecution, that for several years had deluged that unhappy country with blood, still raged in all its fury. A woman, advanced in life, had an only son; he was the sole comfort and support of her declining years. This son, in whom all her affections centred, was about to be arrested and put to death as a Christian. The despairing mother came to cast herself at the feet of the missionary; her cries were heartrending. The words of the missionary, exhorting her to resignation, were at first in vain; nothing could comfort her or assuage her grief. At last he reminded her of the example of Mary. He told her that Mary

also had an only Son, whom she loved as never before had mother loved a child, still she followed Him to Calvary and witnessed His death without uttering a complaint, although He was condemned unjustly, and saw Him die amidst the cruelest agonies. Strengthened by these words, the woman stood up, her cries ceased, and her tears no longer flowed. Her heart was full of sorrow, but she bore it in silence; she became submissive and resigned. Presently the merciless executioners came to seize their prey and to drag him to death: she followed. Arrived at the fatal spot, the young man was put upon his knees, and the headsman brandished his sword; the mother advanced, and holding up a portion of her dress, without uttering a word of complaint, received into it the bleeding head of her martyred child; then bearing this precious treasure she returned to the missionary to show him how she had followed the example of Mary; but borne down by her emotions, stricken by the weight of her sorrows, she fell senseless at the feet of the minister of God, who knew not which the most to admire, the heroic courage or the holy resignation of this virtuous mother (*Couronne de Marie*).

PRACTICE.

Never forget that suffering is the portion of the elect, and that to go to heaven we must pass through trials and tribulations. Oh! if the most holy and most perfect of creatures, if the Mother of God has suffered so much, how shall we dare to complain, when we, who are guilty sinners, have something to suffer?

THIRTY-FIRST DAY.

THE CONFIDENCE WHICH WE SHOULD HAVE IN
THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Two things should enlist our confidence: the power and the will to do us good. Now the Blessed Virgin unites these two qualities in an eminent degree. She is all-powerful in heaven, she is full of mercy towards us. Mary is Mother of God, Mother of Jesus Christ, and by reason of that title, she enjoys the utmost influence over the Heart of her Divine Son; Jesus can refuse her nothing. Trace our adorable Saviour through all the recorded acts of His life, and you shall find that He ever regarded it as a duty to obey His holy Mother and to fulfil her wishes.

If Mary already possessed such power with her Divine Son, whilst yet on earth, whilst yet a poor, feeble, mortal woman, how limitless must be her power now that she is in heaven, now that Jesus has seated her at the right of His throne of glory, now that she has been crowned the Queen of angels and saints, and has been constituted

the Depository of His graces and treasures? Hence, the Fathers and Doctors of the Church have not hesitated to affirm that Mary is all-powerful in heaven and on earth, that she is the sovereign Dispensatrix of God's graces, and that they are conveyed through her to us, in such measure as she wills to bestow them.

But Mary is not only all-powerful in heaven, she is also full of pity and love for us; for she is our Mother, and we are her children. Now, we know full well how a mother loves her children; that she loves them more than herself, more than life. How often have we known mothers to face the greatest dangers, to expose themselves to risk of death, in order to snatch their offspring from impending peril? But Mary has done much more for us than this. Mary had one only Son; He was the most amiable and perfect of the children of men; He was God. She loved Him more tenderly than ever before or since did mother love her child; she would have undergone death a thousand times to save His life, and yet she consents through love of us that He should die. Yes, on Calvary, the maternal heart of Mary was divided between

two loves—her love for her Divine Son and her love for us. She had to choose between these two; either to yield up her Jesus to die on the cross a most cruel death, or to leave us to perish eternally, and Mary did not hesitate; she resigned her Jesus into the hands of the executioners, to undergo an agonizing death, that we might be saved. But if such was Mary's tender love for us whilst still on earth, as to sacrifice her Son for love of us, how much greater is her love for us now that she is in the possession of glory, in the abode of perfect love; now that she knows so much more our miseries and our needs; now that she is so powerful with God and can so readily aid and help us!

Have, therefore, confidence in Mary; let your trust in her be unbounded, universal, tender, and childlike; in all your needs, whether corporal or spiritual, whether for yourself or for others, have recourse to this sweet Mother, to this powerful Protectress; she will hasten to your assistance, she will console you in your sorrows, soften your afflictions, help you in dangers, and defend you against temptations. The more unhappy and unfortunate we are the more will she interest herself about us, for

a mother never is more anxious about her children than when she sees them in want and trouble. Let us consecrate ourselves entirely and for ever to her service; let us allow no day to pass without praying to her; let us especially labour to acquire the virtues of which she sets us the example; and how violent soever be our passions, how frequent our relapses, whatever, or how great soever be the difficulties in the way of our salvation, we shall succeed in saving our souls with Mary's help; for it has never yet been heard that any one was lost who was under the protection of this sweet Mother.

EXAMPLE.

Tender confidence in Mary.

In 1638, a young man of nineteen named Michael Pellicer, a native of Arragon in Spain, fell from a cart loaded with corn; the wheel passed over the left leg and broke it. His parents being very poor, he was conveyed to the great hospital of Saragossa, there to receive medical treatment; but before entering, he begged to be brought to the subterranean chapel, where a statue of the Blessed Virgin is very specially honoured, under the title of Our Lady of the Pillar. In dreadful pain though he was, he confessed, heard Mass, and received Holy

Communion ; after which, with a resigned heart, he allowed himself to be carried to the hospital, and yielded himself up to the care of the physician. The doctor, on seeing the state of the limb, at once declared that there was nothing for it but amputation. The leg was accordingly cut off below the knee, and the amputated limb was buried. During the painful operation, the patient uttered no complaint ; but he never ceased invoking the Blessed Virgin, in whom he had the most tender confidence. When the wound was healed, he crawled upon crutches to the feet of Our Lady of the Pillar to thank her for the strength she had obtained for him when undergoing the operation. After some time, the wound being entirely healed, Michael Pellicer returned home to his parents less a limb, but ever entertaining a most lively confidence in Mary. One evening, after a day spent in going through the neighbouring villages begging alms, quite tired out, he went to bed, leaving his wooden leg beside the fire-place, where his father and mother sat. After some time his mother, anxious lest his fatigue had made him unwell, came into his little room to see if he slept. What was her astonishment to see two feet in place of one ! She ran to tell her husband. He quickly awakened his son, who, opening his eyes, exclaimed : " Ah ! why have you awakened me out of such a delightful dream ? I dreamt that I was in the chapel of Our Lady of the Pillar, and that, in recompense for the confidence which I always had in her, she had my lost limb replaced by two angels." " It is not a dream," replied his father, " for your limb is in truth restored." Their cries of joy, drew their neigh-

hours around them; the fame of this wonderful miracle soon spread abroad, and great numbers came to witness it. The leg was perfectly restored; there only remained a red mark showing where it had been amputated, a mark that never disappeared. This miracle, established by the most incontestable and convincing proofs, was publicly admitted and proclaimed by the Archbishop of Saragossa, on the 16th April, 1641 (*Bollandists*, 25th July).

THE END.

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the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million (1990–2000) and is projected to increase by a further 1.5 million by 2020 (Office of National Statistics 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to improve the health of older people, and the need to ensure that the health care system is able to meet the needs of this population. The Department of Health (2000) has set out a strategy for improving the health of older people, and the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) (2000) has published guidelines for the management of older people. The aim of this paper is to review the current state of research on the health of older people, and to identify areas for further research.

1. Introduction

The health of older people is a complex issue, and there is a need to understand the factors that influence health in this population. This paper reviews the current state of research on the health of older people, and identifies areas for further research. The paper is organized into three sections: (1) the health of older people, (2) the health care system, and (3) the role of the family.

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